

4-15-2011

Business for Babies

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"Business for Babies" (2011). *News Releases*. 938.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/938

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



Business for Babies

04.15.2011 | Students, Business

A new design for an infant formula bottle that could save babies' lives, as well as make feeding easier for busy parents, won the \$20,000 first prize in the University of Dayton's 2011 Business Plan Competition.

Infant Innovations, the company conceived by Jimmy Merlo, won the competition with a business plan for an easily portable nipple cap for bottled water that delivers infant formula safely into clean water. The cap is filled with a serving of baby formula and popped to release the formula into a

standard water bottle.

"The design has the potential to dramatically reduce infant mortality in developing countries where water quality is a problem while offering portability and travel convenience to parents in developed countries," said Dean McFarlin, chair of the University's management and marketing department and NCR Professor of Global Leadership Development. "According to Infant Innovations, every 30 seconds an infant dies from lack of access to clean water and improper feeding methods. This product can save lives and combat malnourishment in poor countries."

McFarlin said Merlo, a student in the University's entrepreneurship program, refined his idea in an innovative course on new product development taught by faculty from the entrepreneurship program and the School of Engineering. Merlo was mentored by Rich Kocon, president of Kocon Consulting.

Infant Innovations was one of five finalist teams competing in the fifth-annual competition, which McFarlin said drew 90 entries and involved nearly 200 people — new records for the competition.

"The entries themselves were the most diverse and sophisticated we've seen yet, with a majority involving some form of technical innovation. Our finalists were fantastic. All of them either create new technology or use the Internet in unique ways as part of their business platform."

Business plans were winnowed through a three-stage process in which they were judged on whether they were feasible, profitable and outlined an innovative product worthy of going to market. Other winners announced at the School of Business Administration's annual entrepreneurship banquet on April 14 were:

Second place (\$10,000) Idea Rally offers a crowdsourcing tool for organizations and students to engage in open innovation, offering clients access to fresh ideas by giving creative students the opportunity to submit solutions to posted challenges. The team included Matthew Veryser, Senay Semere and was mentored by Keith Daniel, Management Consultant

Third place (\$5,000) — DECX Modular Decking System is an inexpensive, do-it-yourself composite deck product assembled and installed without tools, with many residential and commercial applications. The team included: Michael Weaver, Patrick Bertke, Jon Van Leeuwen and was mentored by Rob Murray, director of economic development for the city of Riverside, Ohio.

Fourth place (\$3,000) — MissApp will develop mobile phone applications tailored for women. Mobile app developers continue to overlook women and MissApp will help fill that demand. The team of Kathryn Sunday and Patrick O'Grady was mentored by Greg Popham, an alumni of the University's entrepreneurship program, and National Partner Business Manager at HP Networking.

Fifth place (\$3,000) — MyInsuranceComparison.com is a free website for consumers to shop for auto insurance rates online and outperform competing insurance shopping sites. Patrick Mergler was mentored by Troy Augustine, CEO of iNET Interactive.

The business plan competition is designed to help entrepreneurs get to the next level of growth and development for their companies, McFarlin said. It offers cash prizes totaling nearly \$60,000, along with expert advice on transforming a great idea into a viable plan for launching and growing innovative businesses.

The top three finalists will have an opportunity to pitch their ideas to The Connor Foundation Seed Fund for up to an additional

\$50,000 in loans or convertible debt, McFarlin said. The Connor Foundation wants to support University alumni and students who are ready to take the next step in growing new businesses.

The University of Dayton is recognized nationally for its innovative programs for student entrepreneurs. The Princeton Review and *Entrepreneur* magazine ranked the program in the past five years as one of the top 10 programs in the nation. It's the highest ranked program in the Midwest and the highest ranked program on a Catholic campus.

All sophomore entrepreneurship majors are given \$5,000 loans from the Crotty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership to start their own businesses. Flyer Angels gives undergraduates hands-on experience in investing in new businesses.

Flyer Enterprises, composed of eight student-run businesses on campus, is the fourth largest student-run operation in the nation, with more than \$1.4 million in annual sales

For more information, contact Dean McFarlin, at 937-229-4928 or mcfarlin@udayton.edu.