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NEWS RELEASE

CHERRY CHEESECAKE CAPPUCCINO HELPS TEACH STUDENT ENTREPRENEURS AT UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, Ohio — With employee training, inventory crises and 70-hour work weeks, Mike Kaiser could be any small business operator.

Instead, he's a 20-year-old sophomore at the University of Dayton, serving as president of The Blend, the new student-run coffee house on campus. He's getting plenty of hands-on experience in entrepreneurship, one of his two majors, as well as practical reinforcement for the subjects he studies in class.

The coffee house had a quiet opening in January to allow for training, followed by a grand opening this week. The Blend joins another student-run business on campus, Rudy's Fly-Buy, a small grocery store in the student neighborhood that is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

"One of the surprises has been the huge amount of people coming in for coffee," said Kaiser, who one day had to make a quick trip to his supplier in Columbus for coffee beans and chocolate syrup to replenish the shop's supplies. His staff has also supplemented their basic inventory with milk from the United Dairy Farmers convenience store right around the corner.

Kaiser, who also majors in management information systems, and his staff feature a "Drink of the Day," and favorites with patrons have so far been Cherry Cheesecake Cappuccino, Milky Way Latte and Banana Nut Toffee for both cappuccino and latte.

The Blend, with hours from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fridays, is located in the new Ryan C. Harris Learning Teacher Center on the lower level of Roesch Library on campus. The center, which opened in January, is designed for faculty and students to explore innovations in learning and teaching.

Faculty and staff members supply the 8 a.m. customer rush while students hang out more in the evening hours.

Student officers of the enterprise are all members of Robert Chelle's entrepreneurship class, which debuted in fall 1999 and requires that students develop fully functional businesses.

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The coffee house idea was already in the works and funded (the University provided \$32,000 in start-up funds that The Blend will repay) before the class started in September, so Chelle encouraged Kaiser and his crew to keep that effort as their class project. Other students in the class are designing, marketing and selling banners while another team is doing the same with T-shirts. Projects explored but rejected included food delivery in the student neighborhood and an online book exchange.

As in real life, the idea is for the entrepreneurs to make money. Students start their businesses with \$3,000 in seed money that comes from a \$2 million gift from the L. William Crotty Family Foundation. They learn the basics of marketing, management and finance in the first months of the fall semester. By December, they gear up for sales. The micro-companies will shut down in April, repay the seed money and then donate any profits to the charity of the team's choice.

The Blend will remain an ongoing concern and, after its start-up phase, will pay rent to the University.

The experience is invaluable, said Chelle, who learned his own lessons while building Dayton-based High Voltage Maintenance Co., a technical service company that specialized in predictive testing and electrical engineering for power distribution systems. Chelle, who serves as UD's first entrepreneur-in-residence, bought the firm in 1973 and sold it to Emerson Electric in 1996.

"Entrepreneurship is a contact sport and the value is in the collisions," Chelle said. "I usually stumbled and lost at least some money along the way. Here, the students are mentored and they have a safety net while they're learning and doing. This is classroom learning that's being applied immediately."

Kaiser said the real-life lessons in entrepreneurship continue with every stage of development. Ninety applicants were eager for the seven employee slots. "We thought it was so important to get really good people," Kaiser said. "We want them to be able to learn and take over parts of the business. We expect more of them than to just work here."

Vice president of operations for The Blend is Catherine "Cat" Weber, 19, a sophomore from Fostoria, Ohio, who is majoring in management and philosophy. Her experiences with The Blend have given her an insight into her future career. "I'm not an entrepreneurial person," she said. "I always thought of opening my own coffee shop, but now I see I want something more structured. I can see myself getting into a corporate setting, working behind the scenes and making decisions. And I can always open a coffee shop later, in my retirement."

But the pair said there's always more to learn. "One of our employees asked if he could dye his hair blue," Kaiser said. "Our management team hadn't talked about that."