

THE WINDSOR STAR

Entrepreneurs to pitch startup ideas

By Dave Hall, The Windsor Star - February 26, 2011



Tim Ladouceur, left, Anthony Pecaski, Tyler McKinley and Ron Elliot are participants in the Odette School of Business business plan competition. Winners and runners-up will be announced Thursday. Photograph by: Scott Webster, The Windsor Star, The Windsor Star

Six local entrepreneurs will have a chance to pitch their startup ideas to a panel of judges next month in the first Centre for Enterprise and Law business competition.

Ideas ranging from collapsible rain barrels to ultraviolet window films and from online clothing products to a website outlining campus information for students will be unveiled March 5 at the Caboto Club.

Mentors who have been working with the participants in helping them develop their business cases include:

Sabrina DeMarco, of the Windsor-Essex Small Business Centre;

Stu Sutton, of Sylectus;

Carol Normandeau, of United Communities Credit Union;

Rob Whent, of the WEtech Alliance;

Mitch Fields, of the Odette School of Business;

Jack Jorgensen, of Advance Business Systems;

and Paul Foster, of The Business Therapist.

"It's been a fun and fascinating process to be part of," said Kimberly Forrest, advertising and promotion co-ordinator for the Odette School of Business MBA society which is helping co-ordinate the contest.

The contest was split into two divisions to try and separate those with experience pitching ideas from those trying it for the first time, said Forrest.

The finalists are Anthony Pecaski, Ricardo Stephens and Tyler McKinley in the 29 and under age category and Ronald Elliot, Amir Amintabar and Marissa Zuliani in the over-30 division.

Forrest said 30 individuals registered when the contest opened last August, 15 ultimately submitted formal business plans and from that pool, six finalists were selected.

"Preparing for the competition and preparing a business plan are probably the hardest parts of the invention process," said Elliott, who has patented a

collapsible rain barrel for ease of shipping and off-season storage. "You have to go through the whole process of explaining the what's and whys of your idea in writing, aiming at an audience you have to assume knows nothing about the product or its market.

"While winning would be great, having experts help you polish your business plan before going after funding is valuable in itself," he said.

Pecaski agreed, saying that in addition to the competition, there's "an added benefit of both receiving insights and advice from industry veterans as well as the ability to develop business-to-business relationships."

Pecaski has set up a company to sell and distribute architectural grade window films for residential and commercial use, McKinley has established the Savvy Taylor to market low-cost tailored suits for customers by using web-based design technology and Stephens is planning a website on which artists can display their work to potential buyers in exchange for a membership fee.

In the older age category, Amintabar is launching campusUp.com which will replace many of the badly organized message boards across campus with an easy to navigate website and Zuliani has proposed opening a handicap accessible family fun and games centre.

At stake is \$5,000 for the winner of each division and \$2,500 to each runner-up The funding has been provided by OPTIC VI, a local program launched to help support and develop new business in the Windsor-Essex area.

Winners and runners-up will be announced March 3 following an afternoon of presentations and a keynote speech by Nick Shields, of Suede Productions Inc.

Judges for the competition are Deborah Jones of Biz-X Magazine, Pete Mateja of the Odette School of Business and Charlie Regan, a Windsor entrepreneur who owns a number of businesses including Nerds on Site.

For more information and event tickets, visit cbar-iplin.ca/bpc.

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