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Annual Entrepreneurship Fair features youth programming, business owners awarded

Over 1,100 Cheyenne River youth and adults attended the 2009 Entrepreneurship Fair held in Eagle Butte, Tuesday, February 24th. Hosted by Four Bands Community Fund, the day-long event featured hands-on activities and awards for 3rd through 6th grade students, presentations and activities for high school students and a banquet and awards ceremony open to the public in the evening.

“The purpose of the Entrepreneurship Fair is to create awareness by planting the seeds of entrepreneurship early in area youth”, said Tanya Fiddler, executive director of Four Bands Community Fund. “Private sector development plays a major role in rural community growth and sustainability. Our goal is to encourage everyone on the Cheyenne River Reservation to consider entrepreneurship in order to build assets and create jobs.”

Grade school students learned first-hand about entrepreneurship by creating products, marketing and selling the products and earning tokens to spend on various items, save or give away. Classes that saved the most of their earnings earned a pizza party. The four top classes are Mrs. Mitchell’s fourth grade, Ms. Gwin’s fifth grade, Ms. McWhorter’s fifth grade, all in Eagle Butte, and Ms. LeBeau’s sixth grade in Tiospaye Topa.

Junior high and high school students from area schools heard presentations about becoming entrepreneurs from youth business owners Jesika Garrett, of Dupree and RJ Lawrence, of Eagle Butte. Mark Peacock also addressed the students and encouraged them to set goals and follow their dreams to become successful. Members of the Wakpa Wasté chapter of American Indian Business Leaders (AIBL) were on hand to lend support for the event and welcome students.

Area junior high students were honored for their participation in youth entrepreneurship activities. Paisha Eagleman, of Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, Shelby Gray, of Tiospaye Topa and Alysha O’Connell, of Dupree earned cash awards for their entries in the Entrepreneurship Essay Contest.

The Entrepreneurship Fair culminated with a banquet and awards ceremony in the evening. Participants heard presentation about Four Bands’ new Making Waves campaign and learned about business and marketing opportunities available on the Cheyenne River Reservation.

During the awards ceremony, local business owners were recognized. Willetta Dolphus, owner of Rosie’s Closet, in Eagle Butte, was named the 2009 Micro Entrepreneur of the Year. Rosie’s Closet is a consignment store located in the Teton Mall. The store carries new and used clothing and household items. To keep products moving through the store and to entice return customers, Willetta updates prices and rearranges products on a daily basis.

JTR Trips, a family owned business in Eagle Butte earned the 2009 Small Business of the Year award. Owners Jared, Tyson and Rebecca LaPlante took over the sporting goods business in 2007. The family

has overcome unforeseen obstacles since opening their business, but they have worked hard to continue serving their customers.

“We are pleased to recognize Willetta Dolphus and the LaPlante family for their dedication and commitment to providing quality products and services to their customers,” said Fiddler. “Both businesses are contributing to the local reservation economy and are setting a positive example for the rest of our community.”

Area businesswomen receiving Women & Co.® Microenterprise Boost Program equity awards were Korey Fischer, Korey’s Karing Touch and Tanning; Margaret O’Leary, A Touch of Therapy; and Karen Ducheneaux, Zintkala Luzahan Productions. Each woman received cash awards provided by Citigroup Foundation, through the Association of Enterprise Opportunity, to help cover business expenses or to positively impact their businesses. They will also receive technical assistance through Four Bands.

To learn more about Four Bands’ Entrepreneurship Fair, call 605-964-3687. View event highlights, including photos and information about business award winners, online at FourBands.org. The 4th Annual Entrepreneurship Fair is scheduled for Wednesday, February 24th, 2010.



JTR Trips, of Eagle Butte earned the 2009 Small Business of the Year award. Pictured, from left: Four Bands board members, Mary Olive Johnson and Kirk Beyer; JTR Trips owners Jared, Tyson and Rebecca LaPlante, Four Bands’ executive director, Tanya Fiddler and board member, Stephanie Davidson.



Willetta Dolphus, owner of Rosie’s Closet, is the 2009 Micro Entrepreneur of the Year. Pictured, from left: Four Bands’ board members Mary Olive Johnson, Kirk Beyer and Stephanie Davidson; 2009 Micro Entrepreneur of the Year Willetta Dolphus, and Four Bands’ executive director, Tanya Fiddler.



Businesswomen who received **Women & Co.® Microenterprise Boost Program equity awards** are (from left) Margaret O’Leary, A Touch of Therapy; Korey Fischer, Korey’s Karing Touch and Tanning; and Karen Ducheneaux, Zintkala Luzahan Productions.



Paisha Eagleman received a cash award for her entry in the junior high entrepreneurship essay contest. Other students who earned awards, but were not available for a picture, are Shelby Gray of Tiospaye Topa and Alysha O'Connell of Dupree.



Third through sixth grade students from Tiospaye Topa and Eagle Butte schools enjoyed the activities at the Entrepreneurship Fair. Third graders wrote essays about Emily the Entrepreneur and earned dolls or gift certificates for their participation. Fourth through sixth graders designed greeting cards to market and sell at the event. Earnings from the sale of their cards were used to purchase items, save or give away.



Junior high and high school students from Eagle Butte, Isabel, Timber Lake, Tiospaye Topa and Takini convened at C-EB high school to hear encouraging presentations from youth entrepreneurs and former teacher, Mark Peacock. Local organizations set up booths and provided information to students. A football simulation game featuring financial literacy trivia was also available to students.