



MONEY MATTERS

'I want to be a millionaire' — a new program for kids

By MIKE PEMBRY

Special to The Independent/Free Press

A successful businessman at six year old! It may sound impossible but that's the kind of achievement reached by a new program called "I Want to be a Millionaire" and now it's here in our community.

The title isn't to be taken too seriously. It's simply showing young people they can reach for a dream. It's a way of showing them that they don't have to depend on some-

one else to offer them a job or to depend on government handouts. They can forge a future for themselves and help their community on the way.

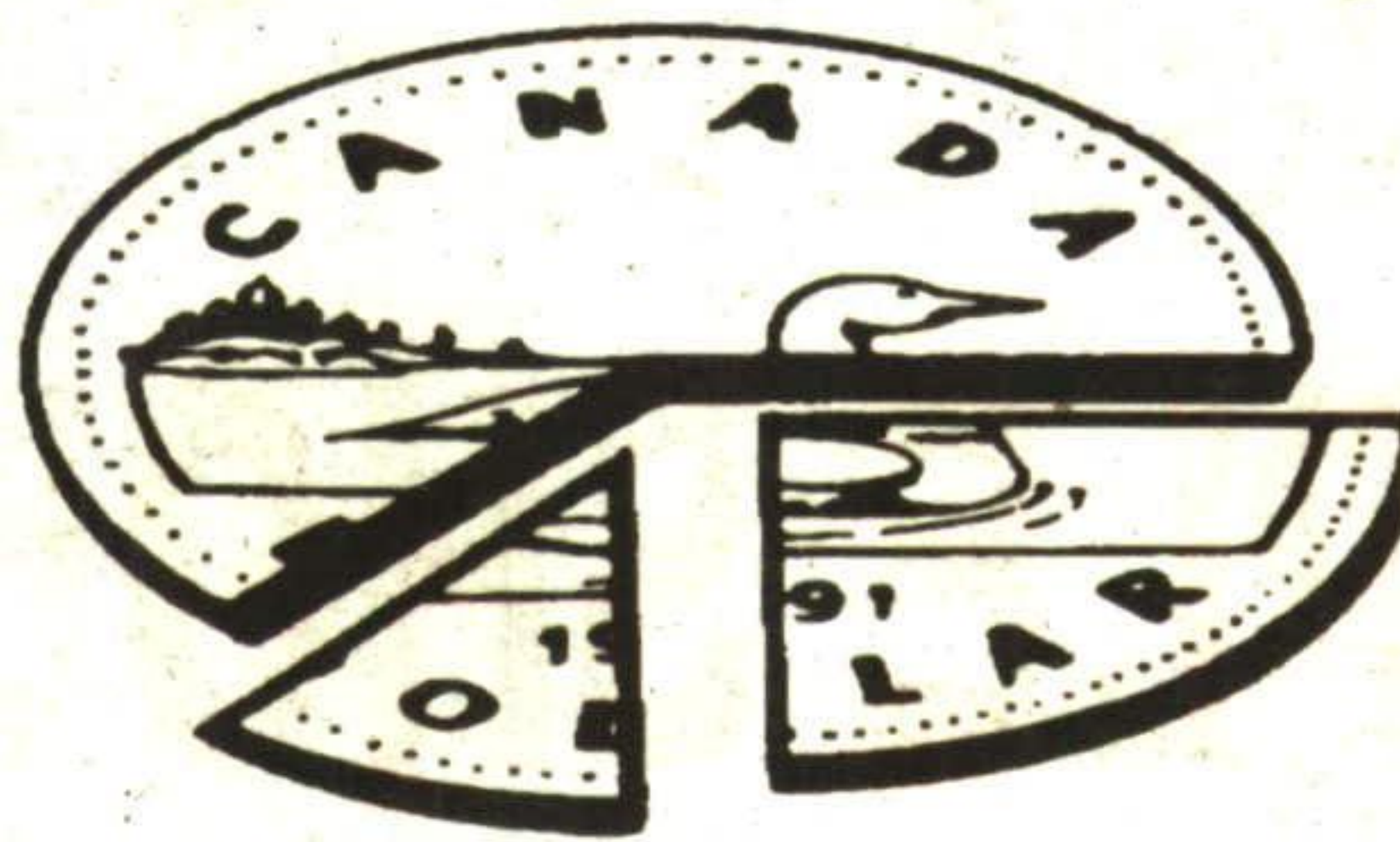
And the record of this young program is impressive — Jesse Mason of Cumberland County, Nova Scotia used the program to launch a small turkey operation when he was six years old. Now he's 10 and has expanded his business and is turning over a handsome profit. This year he's busy thinking of new ven-

tures.

Another 13-year old girl in the same area collected clothing remnants and made fancy hats which were sold at local fairs. One teenager took advantage of living on a road near a provincial park and started an ice cream stand which she later expanded by adding other snacks. This business was so successful that her parents joined her and it became a family business.

Not all the ventures show a profit, but they are all successes. These young business people build confidence that could allow them to start businesses in the future, or become better employees because they have an appreciation of what it takes to make a business prosper.

The program was conceived and developed by Bill Finley Plunett of Nova Scotia. His thinking was that he could put some life and hope into the depressed rural area around him. With unemployment running at 24 per cent in Cumberland County, young people just couldn't see a future for themselves. The psychology of living in an atmo-



Teaching the value of a dollar

sphere where many had resigned themselves to a life of unemployment and welfare was draining any entrepreneurial spirit the young people may have had. Now Bill's program is in place from coast to coast in Canada and has branched out to Hungary, Bermuda and even South Africa.

Here's how it works. The community, through a group of interested adults, raises about \$4,000 to capitalize the program. The group chooses facilitators who attend a local workshop for training in presenting the program, raise funds and organize meetings and celebrations. Then, while making presentations at schools, and community clubs, they invite young people from the ages of 6-19 to come up with innovative small business plans - anything from breeding pets to painting fences.

Next, the core group decides on the most worthy enterprises and they award the chosen business children \$100 each to finance their program. They then attend workshops that will teach them how to

start their business, manage it and do simple bookkeeping. A mentor is assigned to each child to help with any questions or problems. Each child is given a book that allows them to keep track of their finances and performance.

In cases where there are a large number of worthwhile projects, the program may be split into smaller units to accommodate the response and to avoid disappointing a lot of budding entrepreneurs.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on making the young people feel good about their business and to let them taste success. And success is not measured in terms of profit, although there have been some impressive numbers of profits measuring over \$2,000. The true measure of success is the experience it gives these young people so that they lose the fear of launching out on their own, or they learn that it's not their thing and they would rather be employed by somebody else.

But one cannot discount the economic benefit of this program. Every person starting a new business is another off the social support system and a potential employer of others. In the near future all these young people will be adults with an increase potential to enliven the economic status of their community. Some have even shown immediate results.

The final part of the program is a celebration. Here, parents, children and all interested parties get together for a celebration of the success of the participants. Each young person gets a chance to tell the people what they did and what they learned. Then it's the opportunity of the group to show their admiration of these brave young people. Often this occasion is used to hold a barbecue and to use any funds raised to finance the next year's entrepreneurs.

Our community has made a start.

On January 22, a small group of people gathered at the Pembry home, just south of Belfountain to hear Bill tell his story. As a result, those attending decided to immediately launch a local program. Program Chair is Lynn Wood of Belfountain (519) 927-5921.

A meeting Wednesday

The first public meeting of this group will be held in the Belfountain Community Hall on Wednesday night, February 9 at 7:30 p.m. Anyone of any age is invited to attend. This meeting could be the launch pad for a new spirit of enthusiasm and self-help determination that could transform the country and perhaps the world.

If you are tired of hearing of the growing number of unemployed then you should attend this meeting and give your support to this program or start up a group of your own. This is a grassroots, self-help program that could offer new hope for the future.

For more information, call Lynn Wood (905) 452-7272 or (519) 927-5921, Mike/Becky Pembry or Derek at (905) 838-2800.

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