

COMMUNITY: Marketing business ideas made easier through the Youth Entrepreneurship Program

Up and running

Support and cash already helped 29 enterprising youth get their business concepts off the ground

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN
Staff Writer

Whether you're making pickles, advising teens on the dangers of drugs or scouting company documents for tax savings — if you have a marketable skill, you could be running your own business.

And there's help, support and funding just around the corner.

The Youth Entrepreneurship Program offers young people 19 to 29, seven weeks of practical business theory and marketing, support and advice in securing bank loans and leases.

The best part — the youth get \$200 a week so they can eat while trying to get the business off the ground.

"I was able to do things for my business I never could have afforded," said Auroras April Beaton, referring to business cards and pamphlets she uses to promote her new company.

Beaton is a motivational speaker. Her customers are schools, youth groups and churches.

She warns children about teenage pregnancy, drugs and dropping out of school.

With more than seven years experience working in Toronto for various organizations including Children's Aid, Beaton had been thinking about starting a company for a while.

"Actually, it was sort of a fluke. I had been thinking about it and then I saw an ad about the YEP program in a business magazine. So I made a call."

Catherine Turner is YEP director, motivator and all-around support person. She takes the calls, interviews people and determines if proposed businesses are viable.

She remains a silent advisor long after the program has been completed.

"I look for three things: the skills and experience of the person, their passion and their finances," she said.

"But mostly, I look for their passion: If they have the drive and the desire, they can almost always find a way to succeed."

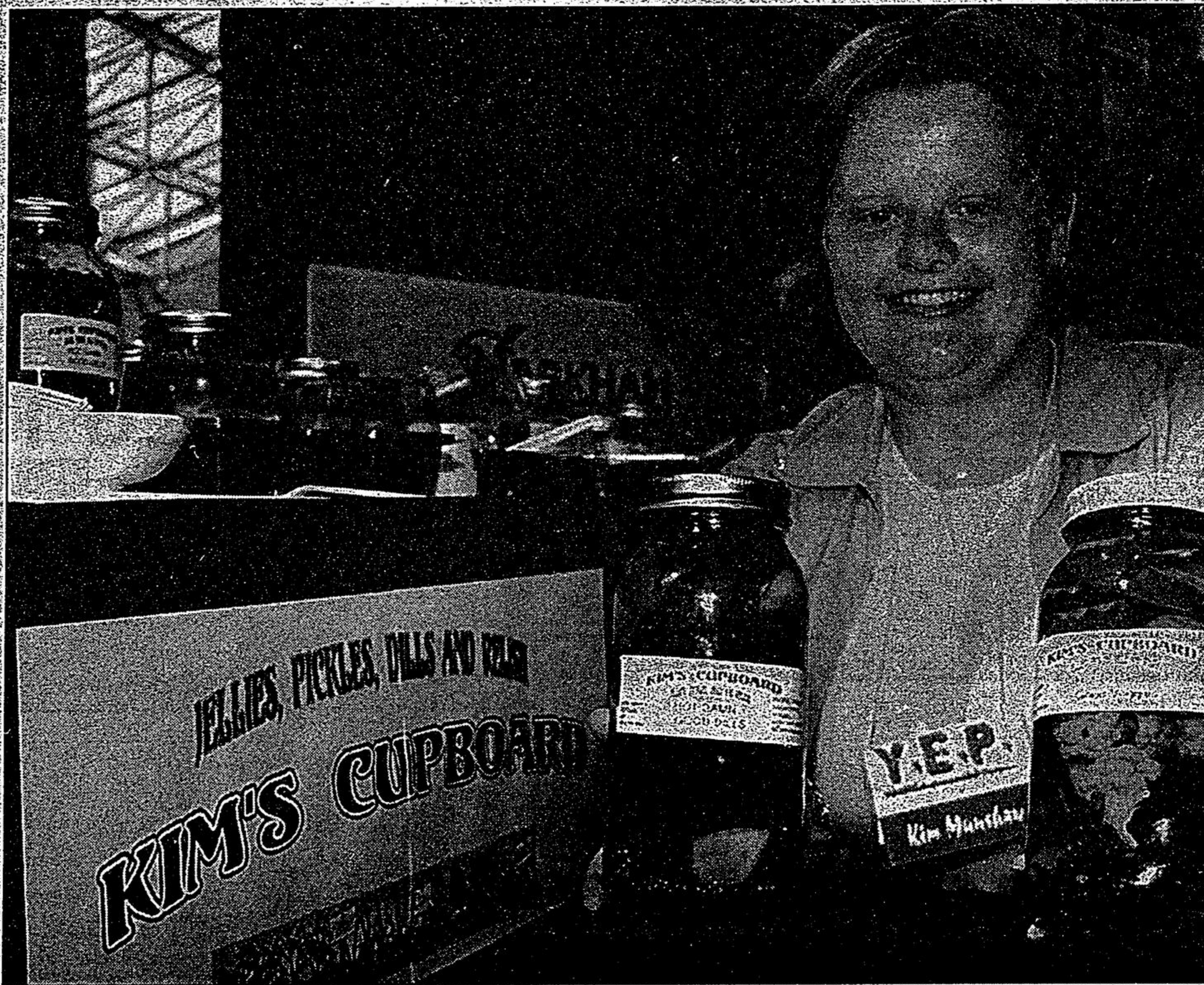
The program has federal support through the Human Resources Development Canada department and YEP impressed Prime Minister Jean Chretien during an April forum on his Youth Entrepreneurs Task Force in Ottawa.

Kim Munshaw of Holland Marsh spent six years making preserves and pickles for a local farmers market.

She grows her produce and makes gift baskets of her creations for friends and family at Christmas. They kept telling her she should start a business.

A call to Turner made it relatively simple, she said.

"The weeks of theory was very helpful. I learned all kinds of stuff I never would have



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEN

Kim Munshaw displays some of the products she displayed at the Markham Civic Centre on Thursday as part of a federally funded Young Entrepreneur Program. Munshaw is one of 29 young people in York Region who have taken advantage of the seven-week business course.

thought of — GST registration, business registration — a lot of little things.

"They pointed me in the right direction."

Munshaw expects to be in small specialty stores across the region by fall, under her own company name: Kim's Cupboard.

Mohsin Ali was laid off from an accounting firm 18 months ago.

The 26-year-old Markham man had trouble finding another job and saw an ad about the YEP.

"I had the skills, but I needed the business tools," he said. "Catherine has been great. I use her as a role model."

Ali is a commodity tax specialist. He helps companies large and small, non-profit orga-

nizations and disabled groups find tax savings they didn't know existed.

"The government allows a lot of provisions for refunds these groups should be reclaiming," he said.

"Accountants charge \$100 or \$150 an hour — I charge by contingency. If I find savings, then they pay. And there hasn't been one time that I haven't found something."

Support from the YEP has helped Ali many times. He used staff expertise to help recover fees from companies who wouldn't pay; Turner has helped keep him motivated and energetic, he says.

"It's amazing how well I'm doing. I definitely can make a living at this," Ali said.

Since the first program ran in October, 29 businesses are up and running in York Region, Turner said.

"Many, many people have told us they never would have been able to do it without the support and the money," Turner said.

"It's almost enough for them to know they can be self-reliant."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

YEP has three offices in York Region

Markham: 948-9622

Newmarket: 898-5138

Keswick: 476-8088

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