

Business winners get hard work lesson

BY PATRICK MANGION
Staff Writer

For Nicole Silverberg, the pool wasn't a place to relax. It was hard work.

But it paid off with a \$500 second prize in the Business Plan Challenge for her company, Pools With Pizzazz.

"It was so much harder than I thought it would be," the Grade 11 student said of the business that earned her an A in teacher Gay Eastman's class at Langstaff Secondary School earlier this year.

She came to realize a standard 40-hour work week wouldn't suffice if she were to actually start her own business.

"It's a lot harder than it looks," Nicole said.

It was a lesson learned by senior high school business students from Vaughan, Richmond Hill and the north end of the region in the inaugural contest designed by several of York Region's local business enterprise centres.

Students were invited to submit a business plan, outlining all facets of running a business.

The entries included everything from

pet grooming to Internet web hosting solutions and exotic sports car training.

Participants spent about a month working on cash flow, market share and other key business principles.

They gathered at a Richmond Hill hotel last Thursday to learn who has what it takes to make it in the often cruel and unforgiving realm of business.

Local business leaders decided who would win with the three \$1,000 top prizes.

The competition brought out the best in the region's students, exceeding the expectations of judges and event organizers, said Michael Disano, co-ordinator of the Richmond Hill small business enterprise centre.

"These are people who have been in the game for a long time and they were very impressed," Mr. Disano said.

Several students enrolled in Langstaff's international business class captured the judges' imagination.

While many of the students in Ms Eastman's Grade 12 class excelled in the creativity and marketing departments, financials, such as cash flow and forecasting, proved more daunting for some.

"It's a more authentic form of learning. There's book knowledge, but employers want experience," Ms Eastman said.

Langstaff students started work on the project in April and followed the criteria set by organizers over three weeks.

The challenge was a perfect fit for Grade 12 student Tio Chaharbaghi, who is attending Queen's University's commerce program this fall.

Business roots in his family run deep and the 17-year-old was running a web hosting business before entering the challenge.

"I had past experience and used (the business challenge) to build on it," the aspiring chief financial officer said.

CHALLENGE WINNERS

- Tio Chaharbaghi, \$1,000, Langstaff S.S.
- Nicole Silverberg, \$500, Langstaff S.S.
- Yanna Sterlin, \$250, Langstaff S.S.
- Lucky Saraceno, \$1,000, St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School.
- Maciej Makowski, \$500, St. Joan of Arc C.H.S.
- Vanessa Sturino, \$250, St. Joan of Arc C.H.S.
- David Wilkings, \$1,000, Pickering College.
- Jen Gautier and Katy Corrigan, \$500, Pickering College.
- Michael Swift, \$250, King City Secondary School.

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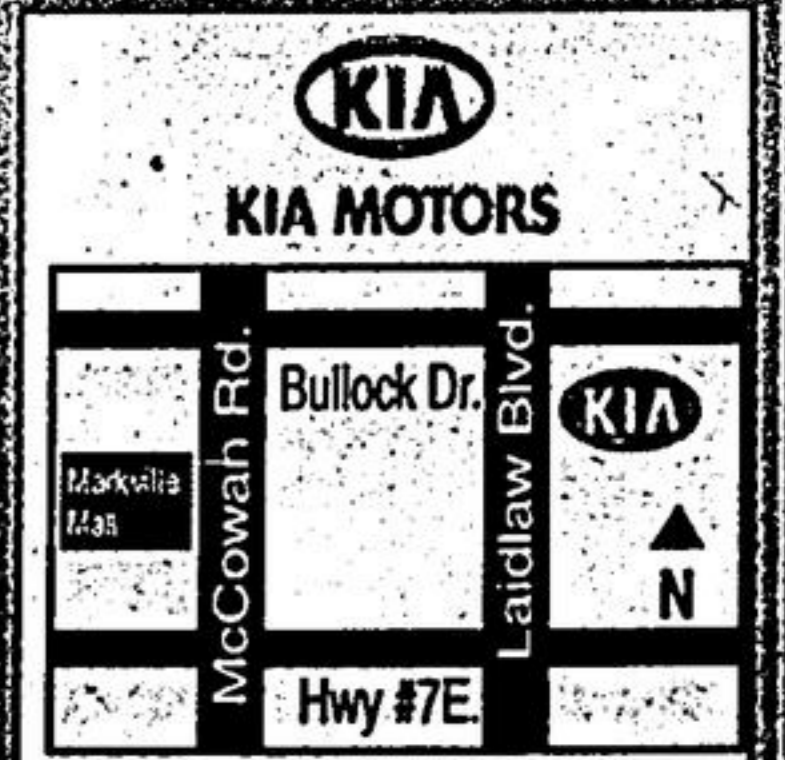
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