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13 YORK REGION STUDENTS CHOSEN FOR SUMMER COMPANY PROGRAM GRANTS

Whiz biz kids roll up their sleeves

BY CHRIS TRABER
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Michelle Eeuwes, 17, already knows you have to get your hands dirty to clean-up as a successful business owner.

The Stouffville resident recently launched Michelle's Flower Gardens, a landscaping and construction equipment sales enterprise. She's one of 13 York Region students accepted into the The York Small Business Enterprise Centre's Summer Company Program that awards grants to young entrepreneurs.

Preparing for business studies at the University of Toronto, Ms Eeuwes' first foray into running her own company has been exhilarating.

She applied in May and accepted in June.

"It's given me the opportunity to start my own company and gave me the mentoring and training I needed," she said.

"The program is great. It's given me skills beyond those I would have learned at a regular job. I highly recommend it."

Participants are eligible to receive up to \$1,500 to help with start-up costs and up to an additional \$1,500 upon successful completion of the program.

The York Small Business Enterprise Centre encourages the development of innovative businesses in York Region by supporting new ventures and providing long-term support for York Region entrepreneurs, York's chairman Bill Fisch said.

'It is important that student entrepreneurs in York Region are given the opportunity to see their business ideas become reality.'

"The enthusiasm and quality of these enterprises are a testimony to the entrepreneurial spirit in York Region," he said.

The Summer Company Program

is a provincial initiative delivered through the centre.

It supports enterprising students, ages 15 to 29, with business development and provides participants with two to three months of hands-on training and mentoring to help with running their businesses.

"It is important that student entrepreneurs in York Region are given the opportunity to see their business ideas become reality," Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor, and vice-chairman of the region's planning and economic development committee said.

"The Summer Company Program assists young entrepreneurs in developing practical, lifelong skills.

It is imperative that we continue to invest in York Region's future during these challenging economic times."

The centre provides assistance to new businesses in the early stages of growth that are located in the six northern municipalities in York Region and complements the other Small Business Enterprise Centres

located in Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan.

Created in partnership with York Region and the Ontario, the centre has seen a 46 per cent increase in its services by assisting 13,208 entrepreneurs, including 333 consultations in the past year.

The centre also provides seminars, workshops, conferences and individual consultation to help small businesses. For young entrepreneurs, the centre offers a business plan challenge in which students compete for \$5,000 in cash rewards.

Last year, the centre attracted 60 submissions and one of them went on to the provincial finals to become first runner-up.

That submission was Pickering College student Barry Mason, a participant in the Summer Company Program for 2009.

For more information on Summer Company 2009, visit www.ontario.ca/summercompany on line. Details on small business development are available at www.ontario.ca/sbcs and for information on the region, go to www.york.ca on the Internet.

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