

Let's talk about it.

-Sally Caldwell

## Student Business Competition

The future of the business world lies in the business owners and entrepreneurs of the next generation. A handful of these young people gathered at Erskine College in Due West, SC, to compete in a Youth Entrepreneurship South Carolina (YEScarolina) Business Plan Competition, hosted and organized by the Freshwater Coast Community Foundation (FCCF) and the business department at Erskine College. YEScarolina is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that facilitates business competitions, teaching seminars, and more in order to teach youth the principles of



*The competing students and their teachers gather at Erskine College in Due West, South Carolina.*

entrepreneurship and free enterprise. South Carolina and the rest of America is dependent upon a vibrant entrepreneurial economy, and YEScarolina is committed to educating today's youth to contribute to the success of the future. The FCCF was proud to help organize the Business Plan Competition. The FCCF is dedicated to improving the community through individuals, families, and businesses. Partnering with the FCCF was Erskine professor Tracy McCurry's Business Strategy class at Erskine College. This class

consists of upperclassmen and women who desire to make their own positive impacts in the business world. These students helped plan and execute the Business Plan Competition by timekeeping the presentations, greeting and guiding the contestants, and more.



*The Erskine College business department's Business Strategy class that helped organize and execute the event (from left to right, back to front row): Josh Nowak, Nichlas Willenborg, Michael Schneck, Tyler Lucas, Cameron Ford, Jordan Williams, Thomas Spencer, Haley Elliott, Jordan Baker, Casey Knight, Chanel Caldwell, Olnisa Gray, Kortney Hauck, and Casey Rosborough.*

High school students from Abbeville High School, Crescent High School, Calhoun Falls Charter School, and Dixie High School gathered in Due West, SC to present their innovative entrepreneurial ideas to a panel of judges. The students competing were: Kionna Agnew, Adam Carter, Brooke Weathers, Dakota Brock, Wilson Sykes, Matthew Fortner, Thomas Dove, Garrett Agnew, and Todd Hardy. All of these students came with teachers from their schools: Aimee Gray from Crescent High School, Brian Milford from Dixie High School, Felicia Thomas-Adams from Abbeville High School, and Michelle Wilson from Calhoun Falls Charter School.

The first phase of the competition took place in Reid Hall, the business department building at Erskine College. The students competed in the preliminaries to gain a spot in the finals. During an allotted time, the high school students gave their PowerPoint presentations before a panel of judges who asked questions and deliberated amongst themselves who should progress toward the finals. The preliminary judges were: Jack Abraham, Assistant Professor of Business Administration of Erskine College; Shane Bradley, Writing Program/QEP Director and Assistant Professor of English at Erskine College; Chris Brown, Owner of Corley's Market and Grill and Main Street Market; Wyatt Thompson, Owner of Wyatt and Farms; Casey Tompkins, Formerly of StaffSource; and Paul Bell, Chief Executive Officer of The Renaissance, LLC. The finalists were Wilson Sykes with his business idea "Splash," Adam Carter with "Some Assembly Required," Dakota Brock with "Carolina Elite K9," and Thomas Dove with "The Lawndromat." The finals competition was held in Erskine College's Bowie Arts Center with a reception afterwards. The finalist judges were Greg Haselden, Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations for Erskine College; Tom Henry, Adjunct Professor; Joe Trull, Owner of Grits & Groceries; and Jeff Wilson, CEO of West Carolina Rural Telephone.



*The FCCF guest business speaker Wes McAllister, owner of McAllister & Sons in Mount Carmel, South Carolina.*

As the judges deliberated, the FCCF featured a guest business speaker: Wes McAllister, owner of McAllister & Sons in Mount Carmel, SC. Wes discussed his 128-year-old company and explained business strategies for both long-standing companies and startup businesses alike. "Your heart has to be in it," he says as he discussed his personal success. Wes also talked about the importance of community. "One of my goals and visions is that McCormick County would become a destination area," he explained. McCormick County and the surrounding counties have so much to offer and even more potential, and one of Wes's goals is to make these places not only known, but recognized as places that people go out of their way to visit.

Upon the return of the judges, the winners were announced. The fourth place \$100 visa gift card winner was Thomas Dove with "The Lawndromat" business proposal. The third place \$200 prize winner was Adam Carter with "Some Assembly Required." Second place with a \$400 prize was Wilson Sykes with "Splash." The first place winner with an \$800 prize and the opportunity to go on to the state finals was Dakota Brock with his "Carolina Elite K9" business plan. This business plan proposed that dogs need better training than what they are getting, and that his company would prevent injury from dog attacks and also train dogs in new, innovative ways. He presented his plan with enthusiasm and impressed both the judges and the observers. Dakota is a senior at Calhoun Falls Charter School and plans to attend Piedmont Tech in the future to major in business. He hopes to continue his business forever and plans to expand it as he goes to college. Dakota will go on to compete in the YEScarolina State Business Plan competition in Charleston, SC, and hopefully then go on to nationals in New York City.



*The first place winner Dakota Brock shaking hands with Jeff Wilson, CEO of West Carolina Rural Telephone.*

The purpose of this business competition was to encourage and educate the youth of today to become the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. The economy depends on the innovation and enthusiasm of young business owners, and this competition is just a small part of facilitating progress towards a better future for the business world.