

Experience Is A Great Teacher

BY PETER DONKIN

I am currently a high school student from the Entrepreneurship Focus Program of Lincoln Public Schools in Lincoln, Nebraska. I attended the Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education "Young Entrepreneurs" conference in May of 07. As a new entrepreneur working on a patented idea for the future, this conference was very useful. It helped me learn about the steps I need to take to get my product from being just an idea to being on the shelf in your local store.

I am very interested in holistic medicine. I guess my father, Scott Donkin, being a Chiropractor was a pretty big influence on me in this regard. My business consists of developing a product from the Agave Cactus. Although Agave, when distilled, is the prime ingredient of Tequila, my product uses it in a completely different and more positive direction. It primarily helps prevent adults from experiencing liver disease and brain damage from alcoholic beverage consumption. The way I see it, if people are going to drink Tequila they might as well try to be healthy about it. I eventually plan to have a whole line of products with a variety of flavors to choose from. My future plans include attending college in Scottsdale, AZ and taking my company with me. After all, if your product is based on cacti it is best to be close to them.



Peter Donkin with his Expo display.

As for the IIEE conference all I can say is WHAT AN EXPERIENCE! I have been a part of many entrepreneurship activities in the past, but nothing compared to IIEE. The culture of motivation and initiative of the hundreds of students who attended was fresh and rejuvenating. So far, I have not experienced an encouraging environment that would compare to this. They kept me quite busy but absolutely every speaker, function and activity was exactly what I needed.

During this conference IIEE puts on a public exhibition called "The Ultimate Expo" which allows students to set-up product booths. The purpose of this is two-fold. First of all, it gives students the opportunity to explain their business plan. Secondly, we could actually demonstrate and sell our products. Being an expo participant, I got great practice at describing my business' mission statement directly to those who may be interested. I also saw first hand how others have planned the finances and operations of their businesses. Most

details that these plans included were perfect examples of the critical thinking that is necessary to run any business.

Being new to the conference, my teacher only brought a few of us. After the conference she said she wished she had brought the entire program. This was a great experience for both students and teachers to experience together. The speakers and sessions were very valuable and memorable.

The environment of IIEE was amazing. Everyone is so upbeat and positive. I would recommend this conference for anyone interested in entrepreneurship or networking. Being around such positive vibes helped me to become truly excited about not only my own project, but also the projects of others. If you're going to take part in IIEE's 08' event I'll see you there because personally I can't wait! □



The Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education (IIEE) invites young entrepreneurs and their instructors to register for the 2nd Annual IIEE Young Entrepreneurs Conference to be held May 1-3 of 2008 in the Chicagoland area. Students from around the country participate in: Business Workshops, Business Plan Competitions, The Young Entrepreneur Expo, The "E" College Tour, Networking with adult and young entrepreneurs, presentations from nationally known Keynote Speakers and more! For more information go to www.iiee.org or call IIEE at (312)587-9296.