

IN THE GAME!!!

By Ryan Gray

While strolling through the African World Festival in Milwaukee, WI last summer, Ryan Gray saw a group of young people busy working at a vendor's booth. There was a lot of buzz around them and the young people seemed excited as they talked to everyone that passed by their booth. Ryan was curious as to what they were doing and went over to speak with them. The young people seemed so bold, so sure of themselves. Ryan wanted to know how he could join whatever program with which they were involved.



He learned that they were involved in a program called "Your Life is Your Business" offered through the Center for Teaching Entrepreneurship. He told his mother that he wanted to be a part of the group. Ryan stayed on his mother about calling CTE until he was enrolled.

By the fall of 2007, Ryan Gray was enrolled in the "Your Life is Your Business" Program and within a few months was getting the urge to start his own business. Ryan launched his business, Blessing Zone Enterprises, selling the Bible Speed board game. Ryan made presentations to educators, religious groups,

and sororities. One evening on his way to class he passed a conference room and noticed over 20 people in a meeting. Ryan's salesmanship antenna went up. He asked his instructor Tyie Andino if he could tell the group about his product. They peeked in the room but the group told them to come back later. Ryan was disappointed but quickly realized he had time to practice his sales pitch. And what a sales pitch he made! The meeting was a group of individuals representing over eight church denominations. They were impressed with what seemed like an impromptu presentation.

Ryan received suggestions on slowing down his presentation and plenty of praise for his courage. And he sold a few games! In May 2008 Ryan presented a workshop titled "Turning Your Hobbies Into a Business" at the Asset Builders of America Money Conference. Currently he has turned his attention to researching other products he thinks will sell in Milwaukee.

Ryan's mother Barbara Paige told the CTE staff that Ryan was always energetic and looking for things to do. She feels CTE keeps youth motivated, and gives them the outlook that there is a future for them. She says Ryan has been introduced to a lot of things he would not have experienced otherwise until he was in high school.

Ryan stated, "CTE's teaching will help you make it in life. CTE gives you good values, and helps you understand what things you should do and shouldn't do when starting a business." Through

entrepreneurship he gets to put his energy into something positive.

Ryan would like to thank his mother for her encouragement and Ms. Rodgers for starting CTE and creating opportunity for so many. Ryan has embraced CTE's philosophy that he is the CEO of Me™ Inc. CTE is a partner with the Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education and brought dozens of students to the IIEE Young Entrepreneurs Conference in May 2008. □

The Illinois Institute for Entrepreneurship Education (IIEE) invites young entrepreneurs and their instructors to register for the 3rd Annual IIEE Young Entrepreneurs Conference to be held in May of 2009 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.

