Bedford students win entrepreneurship contest

Team pitches product to relieve pain at BizGen; walks away with $4,500 top prize

BizGen, a nonprofit with the mission of encouraging the next wave of entrepreneurs, announces two Bedford students as winners of its 2017 competition. Lily Pods, a team led by Madison Kochanek and Tyler Crews, seniors at The Derryfield School, received the $4,500 first-place prize.

The event was held at the University of New Hampshire's Paul College on May 25. More than $8,000 in prize money was awarded to winning teams.

Lily Pods is a technology-based solution to provide heat for common pains and cramps.

"It’s an honor to award Madison and Tyler with first place. They presented an innovative and well-thought-out solution to a problem many people face,” said Ken Johnson, BizGen founder. “Ideas like Lily Pods validate our mission of lighting the spark in next-generation entrepreneurs. Developing the product helped Madison and Tyler develop interest in innovation, engineering and business, which is a major component of that mission.”

Kochanek said, “When the day of BizGen came, we were excited to share our idea with more people, but also very nervous for our pitch. The first round we presented to just a few people and the judges in a classroom. Tyler and I were both very comfortable and our pitch went very smoothly with just a few hiccups. We ended up moving on to the final four, which meant we had to pitch again to a larger audience and more judges. We both felt great on stage and had such a good time doing it.”

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Film festival winners named

The 10th annual New Hampshire Film and Television Festival took place at Red River Theatres in Concord on May 20, with up-and-coming filmmakers from around the state taking home prizes in several categories. A Bedford High School film was named a finalist.

Twenty-four films were selected from 66 entries submitted by students from 16 high schools and career and technology centers. They span a variety of film genres, including animation, comedy, drama, documentary, music video and public service announcements/commercials.

This year’s winners are:

- Jury Award (Best in Show): “Bisque”; Briana Demers, Jenna-Rae Macy, Nathanial Magoon and Grace Lumley; Salem High School.
- Jury Award (Runner up): “Disconnect”; Samuel Ehner; Plymouth Regional High School.
- Jury Award finalists:
  - “Dear Brother”; Chloe Pacocha and Austin Small; Pinkerton Academy.
  - “The Life of Stephen Dominko”; Carly Storro; ConVal Regional High School.
  - “Spaceman”; John Morin, Lubomir Rzepka, Ryan Belrose and Jack Readman; Bedford High School.
- Public Service Announcement Award: “Someone is Waiting”; Zaq Rivera and Haley Hicks; Pinkerton Academy.

The festival is an opportunity for students to have their films seen before the public at a professional venue. For more information, visit nhstudentfilm.com.

The New Hampshire Division of Film and Digital Media, as part of the New Hampshire Department of Cultural Resources, works to expand business activity and employment throughout the state by acting as a liaison between the film and media production industry and an established network of government agencies, the state’s film industry workforce, New Hampshire businesses and local property owners. The division is responsible for location assistance, public relations and general production support in an effort to broaden the cultural, educational, and economic impact of film and media production in the state.

WINNERS: Team takes first in BizGen contest

Second place was won by Marin Arnold and Erin McCool from Souhegan High School for Bedtime Buddies, a novel approach connecting children to distant parents in the armed services. Bedtime Buddies combines mobile application technology with stuffed animals to directly convey messages from distant loved ones. Arnold and McCool won $2,500.

Seth Gunter and George Carlson of Souhegan High School won third place overall for Clever Cart, which combined mobile location services with shopping lists. Clever Cart is a shopping cart-based interface that helps shoppers find items on their lists while also recommending brands and offering discounts from manufacturers or supermarkets. Gunter and Carlson were awarded $1,000 for their pitch.

Fourth place was awarded to Adam Bryant, Tia Delampan, Sebastian Hart-Meyer and Gordon Lewis of Concord High School for TORQUEit, an innovative way to reduce human effort needed to tighten screws and bolts through a torque multiplying handle. TORQUEit won $500 to help move the idea forward.

Overall, 70 students and 30 adult volunteers from New Hampshire and Massachusetts participated in this year’s BizGen competition. Local schools included:

- Concord High School
- Pinkerton Academy
- Portsmouth High School
- Oyster River High School
- The Derryfield School
- Brewster Academy
- Souhegan High School
- Central Catholic High School
- Moultonborough Academy
- Milford High School

“One of the biggest challenges we had to face throughout the competition was answering questions from the judges, but we realized that we know our product inside and outside, and we’ve done nothing but talk about it for months,” said Crews. “We left BizGen with the top prize, and are now moving forward with establishing Lily Pods as an LLC and gaining intellectual property. This has been such an amazing experience, and we are excited to pursue the opportunities that have been created from it.”

BizGen was founded in 2013 to inspire high school students to pursue entrepreneurship as a career through pitch competitions. Student teams develop business ideas, apply topics learned in the classroom and work with entrepreneurs to refine and present those ideas. The process culminates in a make-or-break day where professional business developers, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs judge the pitches and provide valuable advice in the process. For more information, visit biz-gen.org.

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