

Young Entrepreneur Business Fair held at Mel Lloyd Centre, setting youth up for success



Written By **Paula Brown**

Young local business owners had the opportunity to share their small businesses with the community at a youth business fair this past weekend.

The Young Entrepreneur Business Fair was held on Saturday (July 6) from 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Mel Lloyd Centre. The event was part of a program hosted by local literacy advocate and business owner, Suzette Daley.

‘It’s really rewarding and encouraging to see that their passion is now becoming their purpose,’ said Daley. ‘It honestly makes me wish, as an entrepreneur myself, that I had the opportunity to go back and learn all of the information and skills that they’ve learned. It’s incredible and priceless information that they will take into not only their businesses, but also their life and careers.’

The business fair featured six small businesses created and operated by local youth that ranged in sectors including education, baking, beauty and jewelry.

Yahya Mohamed is a 17-year-old high school graduate who finished his secondary schooling with honours in English and academic excellence. He created the tutoring business, EnlightenED English Tutoring

‘I love English and have a huge passion for it. I decided to take that passion and help kids from Grade 1 to 9 with their English comprehension, writing skills and literacy skills,’ explained Mohamed.

Maria Cayo Cuenca is the owner of Mini Storyteller, a tutoring business that looks to help kids from Kindergarten to Grade 4 who are learning English as a second language with their reading and writing skills.

‘I grew up not really learning English and I had to learn it on the way. I wanted to help other kids that don’t know English from the start,’ said Cuenca, whose first language is Spanish.

Cairo Daley, Suzette’s daughter, is looking to help teach a variety of subjects including piano, French and mathematics with her tutoring business, Turning Pages Tutoring.

‘I started out watching my mom with her tutoring and I saw how many people she was helping, so I decided I should try and do the

same thing. I decided to focus on things that I enjoy, so maybe I could give that to other people and they can enjoy it as well," said Daley.

Sixteen-year-old Tinasia Williams-Burke found her passion for baking cheesecake while taking a high school home economics class. While starting out by making strawberry cheesecake, her business Velvet Temptations has grown to include caramel and Oreo flavours.

"When I made it at home my family loved it and I had to keep making more batches," said Williams-Burke. "I wanted some way for me to expand and show everyone how good these cheesecakes are."

Nia Paisley had been making her own lip glosses for months before she decided to take the idea and create her own business, Nia Paisley's Lip Gloss Collection. Since starting her business, she has launched three collections - Summer, Shimmer and Shine, and Actually Nude.

"Making lip gloss is something I'm comfortable with and find more fun than hard so I just really enjoy it," said Paisley.

Middaugh is an 11-year-old clay jewelry maker, who creates different bracelets, phone charms, keychains, and earrings. She initially started making bracelets for fun after getting a clay jewelry kit but decided to create her business when her friends began to ask her about the jewelry she was making and wearing.

"Make sure it's something that you actually enjoy doing and something that other people would like to buy," said Middaugh, about the best advice she learned in the program.

The youth entrepreneur program, hosted by Suzette Daley, started in March and ran for four months.

Over the four months, the participants had access to a variety of videos, which taught them about the various parts of owning a small business including: selling themselves as a business, exploring their passions, connecting with other business owners, marketing, financial literacy, and resources available to small businesses.

Daley was inspired to develop the youth entrepreneur program after learning about the story of Lucie and Thornton Blackburn - two freedom seekers who escaped enslavement in Kentucky and later founded Toronto's first taxi company, "The City."

"After reading their story, it ignited my passion even further for giving back in the community, but also teaching young people about entrepreneurship," said Daley.

Speaking with the Free Press, Daley touched on the importance of providing young business owners a space to share their skills and products.

"Their businesses will become our future businesses, and they come with new, fresh ideas and perspectives. It really allows them to shine a light on what's important to them and the direction they might potentially take their future career," she said.

Daley said she is planning to host the youth entrepreneur program again in the future. Those interested in signing up for the future program are encouraged to reach out to Daley by email at mini2intel@gmail.com.

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