

Young Entrepreneur Business Fair highlights youth-led companies



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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 Sunday (June 29) at Grace Tipling Hall. The event was part of a program hosted by local literacy advocate and business owner, Suzette Daley.

"I am beyond honoured to be able to lead this group to this point in their entrepreneurship journey," said Daley. "I felt incredibly proud seeing each student bring their vision to life. It was clear how much work they put in, from the initial idea to confidently standing in front of judges and the community. Each student came with a different mindset for what they wanted their business to be."

The business fair featured 10 small businesses created and operated by local youth from several sectors, including education, baking, home organizing services, babysitting, cultural drumming workshops, sip-and-paint experiences, sensory kits, resin art, and a youth author book launch.

Maneetkaur Dubb, 11, is the creator of Beaded by Maneet, a small business that sells necklaces, bracelets, bead kits, phone charms, hair clips and scrunchies.

Dubb, who has been creating beaded items for the past three years, joined the entrepreneur program in the hopes of expanding her small business.

"I wanted to expand it and when I hear about this program, I felt very lucky," said Dubb. "It's so good because it actually helps you with everything from market research, your pitch and how to expand and sell your products."

Fourteen-year-old Grace Midanik is the owner of Cozy Critter Care, which provides services in babysitting, literacy, tutoring and DIY craft boxes.

Midanik launched her business last summer with babysitting services and has recently branched out to offer more.

"Suzette came to my school, Centennial Hylands, last year and after hearing about the program, I really wanted to do it," said Midanik.

During the Young Entrepreneur Business Fair, there was also a book reading from youth author Mark Rogers.

Rogers has released a self-published book called "Beyond the Chair," which shares his experience with cerebral palsy and going through life with a disability.

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a neurological condition that can present as issues with muscle tone, posture and movement. It's the result of damage to the brain during fetal development or another developmental disability that affects the way the brain develops.

Speaking with the Free Press, Rogers said he wanted to write the book as a way to open others' eyes to different aspects of life.

The Youth Entrepreneur Program was created by local educator Suzette Daley and launched in March of 2024.

The program provides young aspiring business owners with access to a variety of videos, which teach them about the different parts of owning a small business. This includes 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."

Daley previously told the Free Press that the Blackburn's story ignited her passion for giving back to the community and teaching young people about entrepreneurship.

"I created this program because I believe in giving Shelburne's children the chance to dream big and take ownership of their ideas," said Daley. "Our town is full of young talent, and I wanted to build a space where their creativity and potential could be nurtured. This program teaches more than business, it builds confidence, critical thinking, and communication skills."

Those interested in signing up for the future program are encouraged to reach out to Daley by email at mini2intel@gmail.com