

Young entrepreneurs brighten seniors? Mother?s Day with special event



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A group of young Shelburne residents are making sure seniors in the community are being celebrated during special holidays and occasions.

Students from the Mini-Intel Young Entrepreneur Program hosted a special Mother's Day event for local seniors at the Mel Lloyd Centre on Saturday (May 10).

The Mother's Day gathering included a three-course meal of salad, spaghetti and cake served by the members of the program. The senior guests also participated in a step-by-step sunset painting session led by one of the young entrepreneurs.

The event was not just a celebration of Mother's Day but also served as the start of a new initiative led by the young entrepreneurs that looks to bridge generations and build meaningful community connections.

The initiative was inspired by an idea brought forward by one of the entrepreneurs in the program ?? Samayah McRay.

McRay had shared her dream of starting a small business that combined art and sipping lemonade, appropriately called Sweet Art Studio. In the pitch of her business idea, McRay noted her wish to include senior customers as part of her vision.

?Her compassion sparked a bigger idea: to create a senior social group supported by our youth entrepreneurs,? explained Daley.

From there, Daley reached out to seniors in the Shelburne community to hear their thoughts on the initiative.

?Their response was overwhelming,? said Daley. ?Many expressed that there were very few programs that truly support and engage them. It became clear that this was something deeply needed.?

The Mother's Day celebration is the first of several events the young entrepreneurs plan to host in 2025.

?We wanted to do this because some of them don't have families or they live far away, so we thought it'd be a nice idea to do something that makes them feel special,? said McRay.

The members of the program have committed to hosting similar social events during key celebrations throughout the year, including Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and the summer holiday.

"I hope they liked it and that they feel like we're sort of like their family," said Wimmy Bonikowsky, one of the young entrepreneurs.

While the initiative mainly focuses on creating social events for local seniors, the benefits of the group are not just felt by the older generation.

Donna Blum, an attendee of the Mother's Day event, spoke with the Free Press about the reciprocal nature of the initiative.

"The youth of the town have needed someone to lead them, and Suzette is a good leader; they're going to go far. They're very ambitious, so we wanted to support them," said Blum. "I think with some families, if they don't have grandparents around, the kids can look to different role models."

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.

Students in the Young Entrepreneur Program will be hosting a Business Expo at Grace Tipling on June 29 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., where they will be delivering their final business pitches.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate youth innovation and the community spirit," said Daley.