



Teen Entrepreneur Program Kicks Off Second Year After Successful Pilot Program

August 2020
by Stacy Green

The Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program will kick off its second year Monday, September 21, at 6:00 pm, at High Desert Partnership, hoping to build on the success of the pilot program, which helped local teens create their own successful, for-profit businesses. The free program is open to all county juniors and seniors, and is funded and administered by local nonprofit High Desert Partnership, who will host the introductory meeting. “We’re really excited to see more teens create their own businesses,” said executive director Brenda Smith.

This past year, Mason Radinovich created One Rad Cookie Company, launching a sugar cookie business that grew so rapidly he had to enlist the help of not one but two grandmothers to get all of the decorative cookies wrapped in festive holiday boxes in time for Christmas. “I was getting up before school and coming home right after school, and baking, decorating and wrapping cookies,” said Mason, who had orders for 48 dozen through his facebook marketing campaign.

The program takes participants through an easy-to-follow, step-by-step program, that shows teens how to create a business with the resources they have available to them. According to program creator Stacy Green of Enterprise, “it doesn’t matter how old they are, what kind of students they are, or how much money they have. They can create something from the resources they have available to them, and it’s pretty amazing what they come up with.”

The Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program launched in Wallowa County in the fall of 2010 and has created over 70 teen entrepreneurs. The mission of the program, according to Green, is “to introduce more teens to entrepreneurship and business as a career path, so they can learn how to create economic opportunity for themselves and others. “

“I was involved last year and it was really fun to work with the teens,” said Anna Gahley, a Burns High School graduate who returned to the area and runs a DJ business in addition to her regular job.

Through the new online programming, teens will be able to hear from successful entrepreneurs that will teach them about getting over fear and self-doubt, celebrating failure, smart financial planning and money management, and how to successfully communicate with all types of people.

The Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneur Program enjoyed visits to the business community through last year and hopes to continue to introduce teens to local business owners, as Covid-19 guidelines allow. “It’s exciting to show teens what is happening in their community, so they can start to visualize potential opportunities for themselves,” said Smith.

This year, a team from High Desert Partnership will help guide the teens through the steps to coming up with an idea, figuring out how to launch, and analyzing what is working and what may need to be changed. The team includes Smith, Gahley, and Becki Graham; Tracy Kennedy from the Burns Paiute Tribe; and Andrea Letham from the Small Business Development Center.

To register for the free program, call or text Becki Graham at 503-810-1066.

This article is provided by High Desert Partnership; a Harney County nonprofit convening and supporting six collaboratives including the Youth Changing The Community Collaborative.

