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Western Michigan University
Dolly Xtractor grabs first place at second annual PITCH competition

First place winner Rosie Hall

KALAMAZOO—The top prize of $1,500 was awarded to a Western Michigan University MBA student for providing a more efficient way to work with dollies at a competition for innovative business ideas.

Rosie Hall, an MBA student from Kalamazoo, Mich., captured first place after presenting a three-minute pitch on Dolly Xtractor, a business she and her husband Jeff started. The stainless steel tool attaches to a shoe, allowing for a simple hook and pull of the dolly axle to easily release the platform underneath a stack of product.

“I was very impressed with all of the competitors at PITCH,” says Hall. “It was such a great experience listening to all of the ideas. And thank you to ECCU and Great Lakes Contract Group for this opportunity and allowing us to share our ideas and gain valuable feedback on our businesses.”

Second place and a prize of $1,000 was awarded to a team of MBA students comprised of Elizabeth Mooney, from Kalamazoo, Mich.; Andrew Eaton, from Albuquerque, N.M.; and Gabriella Vezzosi, from Livonia, Mich.; who presented Savvy Dress Rentals, an upscale consignment boutique specializing in new and gently used fashion.

The $750 prize of third place, as well as the People’s Choice award, went to Jonathan Rhodes, industrial and entrepreneurial engineering major from Farmington Hills, Mich., who pitched his business idea GoAnywhere Sleeper, an affordable and secure way for off-road enthusiasts to comfortably sleep within a Jeep Wrangler.

About the competition

Students from across campus were invited to present their innovative business ideas. The second annual competition was organized by the Department of Management in the Haworth College of Business and sponsored by Educational Community Credit Union and Great Lakes Contract Group.

The competition drew 32 pitch teams, and students were judged in progressive rounds by faculty and business community members, including many local business owners. The field was narrowed to eight teams for the final round of competition.
“The ideas that were pitched at this year’s competition showed how seriously WMU students take entrepreneurship,” says Dr. Robert Landeros, interim director for the Haworth College of Business Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. “It was incredible to have judges from the local business community come together to give our students invaluable feedback.”

MACPA high school leaders conference

Inspiring and educating the next generation of young accountants—that was the goal and the outcome of the recent Michigan Association of Certified Public Accountants High School Leaders Conference, held at the Fetzer Center on Western Michigan University’s campus.

Smith

Students spent the morning and early afternoon in educational sessions exploring topics such as being successful in college as an accounting major, different career paths for a Certified Public Accountant, and how to manage personal finances. Then, they embarked on a tour of the college of business, learning more about the undergraduate program and specifically the Department of Accountancy. More than 150 high school students from 12 high schools attended the conference, which featured a variety of sessions presented by Department of Accountancy faculty and students. The WMU-sponsored program had the largest attendance in the State of Michigan this year.

Dr. Ola Smith, associate professor of accountancy and the project manager for the conference on WMU’s end, is gratified to see the excitement of the young business students, many of whom decide to come to WMU as a result of their experiences with the program. “Two of the WMU students who helped this year were originally students who came to the conference in high school,” says Smith. “It is great to see them flourishing at Western and giving back to the MACPA organization.”

Gribbin

Dr. Donald Gribbin, chair of the Department of Accountancy, sees the MACPA High School Leaders Conference as a win-win-win for area schools, WMU and the accounting field. “Being able to connect talented young students with accountancy professors, college students and professionals is critical to growing the number of highly qualified accountants in the state,” says Gribbin. “We greatly value our partnership with MACPA on all levels, and this conference
is a wonderful example of this partnership. Dr. Smith has been instrumental in developing the relationships that have resulted in such a successful conference.”

WMU’s accountancy program is among fewer than 1% of business schools worldwide that have additional specialized AACSB accreditation. Learn more at wmich.edu/accountancy.

Jeff Suffolk

Jeff Suffolk, B.B.A.’02—Taking Chances from Challenges

By: Jessica Silver, communication intern

When Jeff Suffolk, B.B.A.’02, is not shredding down the Colorado slopes or taking family vacations to a favorite spot in Charlevoix, you can find him at his home away from home, Human Movement Management.

Suffolk is the CEO of Human Movement Management, an event production company that produces the world’s largest running races such as The Zombie Run™, The Ugly Sweater Run™, The Color Run™ and The Dirty Girl Mud Run™. In addition to one-of-a-kind races, the company hosts unique events such as the Denver Oktoberfest and the LivingSocial Beer Fest.

“I get to manage 150 of the best employees on the planet day to day, and I get to spend my weekends hosting incredible live experiential events for millions of people around the world,” says Suffolk.

Graduating from Western Michigan University with a degree in finance and commercial law, Suffolk eventually made his way to Arizona where his first company was born. After attempting to swim in Tempe Town Lake and getting issued a citation for trespassing, Suffolk set up a meeting with the parks and recreation director of Tempe to figure out how to get a permit to swim in the town’s lake. From that meeting emerged his first event, the Soma Half Ironman in Tempe Town Lake. The event grew into one of the largest half ironmans in the country, which includes a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride and 13.1-mile run. Soon after, Ironman North America came to host its world famous events there.

After he sold his original company Red Rock, Suffolk served a two-year non-compete and launched Human Movement Management in Colorado a few years later, and the company is now ranked the 19th best company in the United States to work for, according to Outside Magazine. The company most recently made the list of Wellness Top 10 Best and Brightest Companies in America and qualified for Inc. Magazine’s 500 Fastest Growing Companies.

For Suffolk, one of the best takeaways from his college experience was networking. Even though it has been 14 years since he has stepped foot in the college of business, he still speaks with many Broncos from his era. “They have all gone on to do amazing things and are incredible resources for me to lean on. The Bronco network is an enormous resource,” says Suffolk.

One of the most interesting people Suffolk has met is Monroe Rifkin, the founder of American Television Corporation, who created the cable industry as we know it today. Acting as business mentors for Suffolk, Rifkin and his son-in-law Jeff Bennis have helped his company move forward. “They are both incredibly accomplished business leaders and have helped me manage our hyper-growth in stride,” he says.
Suffolk believes one of the biggest challenges that businesses face today is uncertainty in today’s credit and housing markets. But with challenge comes opportunity. “The uncertainty has forced this generation to build truly sustainable businesses,” he says. “With that experience comes monumental struggles but also amazing opportunities to change the future.”

On April 12 The Color Run™ and the Human Movement Management team will be coming to Kalamazoo to put on the “happiest 5k on the planet.” Read more about the Kalamazoo Color Run.

ISM students earn honors in regional competition

by Stacey Markin
April 2, 2014 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO—A team of students enrolled in Western Michigan University’s integrated supply management program finished third overall in a field of 22 at the 2014 APICS Great Lakes District case competition Feb. 21-22 in Downer’s Grove, Ill.


Challenging competition

Part of the challenge for student teams was the short time frame allowed. Teams were given the case at 6 p.m. on a Friday and had to submit and be prepared to present their solution by 9 a.m. Saturday. The WMU team found ways to improve the operations of a fictitious company, Dazz Manufacturing. Not only did the improvements require a process analysis focus, but also financial analysis and validation of the optimal improvement method. Each team member came with a different experience base and was able to contribute to the ultimate success of the team.

"If you look at our performance in this competition, every year the WMU team goes up in placement," says Farwana. "It goes to show that our intensive curriculum is working, not just with the academics, but also with the experiential courses and Bronco Force projects. These experiential opportunities teach us how to do things better, faster and cheaper."

The team relied on its foundational knowledge of the supply chain from coursework as well as members' experiences in industry.

"Not only did this team 'gel' as an ISM family, but several of the team members were able to draw upon recent experiences with Bronco Force Solutions Teams—an initiative that places students in consulting roles within companies," says Ken Jones, director of executive education for the integrated supply management program. "In fact, Layla told me right after the
presentation how similar this case was to her work helping us implement lean processes and systems at Impact Label, one of our Bronco Force clients. As a result, she felt the analysis and written response came fairly easily to the team. I believe this outcome is a great endorsement of our students, and I am extremely proud of them. It also serves as further validation of the experiential learning that is embedded in our program."

Integrated supply management program

Ranked No. 12 in undergraduate supply chain education, WMU’s integrated supply management program has been recognized nationally by several organizations and publications for its leadership in preparing students for careers in supply chain management. The new Western Michigan University Center for Integrated Supply Management offers an array of student learning experiences focusing on hands-on education and innovative research.

Alumni and Friends Share Insights into Business

One of the notable events the college hosts each semester, Professor of the Day, brings alumni and friends to the classroom for an opportunity for students to learn business concepts from executives. The spring 2014 guest professors included:

- Kraig Harper, B.B.A.'89 (Biographical Information)  
  CFO, Service Express, Inc.
- Robert S. "Bob" Baker (Biographical Information)  
  President and CEO, PureData Corporation
- John Crandle, B.B.A.'90, MBA'93 (Biographical Information)  
  Vice President and Senior Commercial Lender, Horizon Bank, N.A.
- Gregory Humes, B.B.A.'83 (Biographical Information)  
  CEO, Quest4 Solutions
- Scott Ochander, B.B.A.'95, B.S.'96 (Biographical Information)  
  Vice President for Enrollment and Marketing, Manchester University
- Lieutenant Colonel Steven C. Welch (Biographical Information)  
  Michigan Army National Guard, Team Leader, Pfizer
Light Center research grant awarded to business professors

by Margaret von Steinen
April 2, 2014 | WMU News

KALAMAZOO—Dr. Bernard Han and Dr. Andrew Targowski, Western Michigan University professors of business information systems, were recently awarded the third annual Timothy Light Center for Chinese Studies Research Grant for their book project, "Chinese Civilization in the 21st Century."

About the project
Han and Targowski will receive $3,000 to publish a book—in both the English and Chinese languages. The volume provides a comprehensive historical review, inspection and evaluation of the state of Chinese civilizations in the 21st century in times of accelerated globalization, and how that will impact worldwide dynamics now and into the future.

An interdisciplinary team composed of researchers from the United States, China and Europe (Poland), will contribute to the project to achieve a balance in approaches and judgments. It will compare Chinese civilizations to global counterparts in the areas of historiography, political science, culture study, economics and technology.

Light Center grants
Light Center Research Grants are awarded annually and provide support to WMU faculty members for research and creative activities that support the study of Greater China.