

High Quality Education, STEMs From Teachers

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Eighth-grade science teacher Natasha Gault appeared before the school board at their meeting Monday to gain approval for a grant application that will help in the integration of the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education) program in the elementary schools.

"I sent out an email at the beginning of the school year and these individuals volunteered without any arm twisting," Gault said. "We're here tonight because this team of teachers is seeking funding for these projects from the Vermillion Area Community Foundation. In order to proceed with the grant proposal they need you to approve this grant process for them. We would appreciate your approval of this grant application."

According to Gault, the grant amount totals \$5,518.73 which will fund STEM for five years.

"Typically the reason we do that is they know we won't be back to bother them for five years," Gault said. "We want to let them know that this plan has longevity and that it's going to be meaningful not just for one generation of students but for a minimum of five. That will reach and touch a lot of students in our school district in five years."

Gault said the team of teachers is very passionate about the integration of STEM and their projects

will make a huge difference.

"Kindergarteners will be building a garden," she said. "First graders are going to be studying friction. It really illustrates that STEM can be integrated at any level. It's not something that we have to wait for high school to have it. If we want students prepared for high school, the earlier you can integrate STEM, the more effective it will be for them. That's definitely their goal and mine as well."

According to Gault, this is not just a local effort. "STEM is a major aspect of our national education movement," Gault said. "STEM has been brought forth in education using science, technology and mathematics to prepare our future workforce."

But wait, there's more. "In addition to STEM preparing our children for the future workforce, this method of thinking can help students find continuity in what they're actually learning in the classroom right now," Gault said. "A true STEM project is not a label on a lesson plan or on an activity. True STEM is more than that. It allows students to experience a topic across the curriculum. It includes activities, expert education, field experiences and also allows students to be completely immersed in what they're learning. It also lets them think, design and build something for a purpose."

For an Extended Version of this Story visit www.plaintalk.net

Entrepreneurs 'Wired' Awake

By Christine Feltes
For the Plain Talk

Businesspeople filled Aalfs Auditorium March 25th for the "Wire Me Awake" entrepreneurship conference.

The conference had barely begun when technical difficulties with the projector caused an interlude that the audience used for some informal networking. For about fifteen minutes, they chatted with their neighbors, leaning over the auditorium chairs and moving around the room.

Five companies presented the state of their businesses and products that they are developing during the startup showcase. First, Paul Jarrett of Bulu Box explained his subscription-based vitamin and supplement company.

"We built a solution called Bulu Box," said Jarrett. "It's similar to Birch Box, except it's for vitamins and supplements."

Next, Tyler Mcentee of Mantis Digital Arts presented the softwares that the company is currently developing.

"At our core, we create child-lead conversations," he told the audience. "That's interactive art, video games, interactive exhibits, and the like."

Following that, Chad Jensen of Ride Bio discussed how the social media site is dedicated to starting conversations about cars and experiences.

"Ride Bio is a platform for meaningful conversations, which stir up fantastic memories of past rides

and preserves those memories for future generations," Jensen said.

Graduate student Zak Fick spoke of his platform, helpuniversity.co that connects college students to those seeking help with odd jobs.

"I had this college labor force idea," Fick said. "I'm trying to bring it to every college campus in the nation."

Last, Ryan Rusher talked about Ceiling Connex, a new ceiling system. His company is interested in hiring graduates from the university.

"It's a snap together, vinyl ceiling grid system," Rusher said. "We want to reach out to existing customers and get some feedback."

Ben Hanten, owner of two Yankton bars and founder of Think 29, was the afternoon's first speaker. He spoke of his diverse experiences launching nine businesses.

"What is an entrepreneur?" Hanten asked. "It's really those who can take the risk; that's the type of person we're trying to inspire."

He reminded the audience that entrepreneurs are dedicated to their ideas and that they do not need permission to pursue their dreams, although sometimes they need help completing their ideas.

"A lot of people in the entrepreneur world love to start things," Hanten said. "Finishing things can be a problem and that's why you need to find people in your circle, or your employees,



Ashley Rae of Her Voice, Her Brand, described how discovering her legacy changed how she does business. CHRISTINE FELTES / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

or co-founders to balance that out"

Owner of Her Voice, Her Brand, Ashley Rae spoke of developing an individual's personal brand as a way of discovering how to use unique talents in the business world.

"I'm here to share with you what worked for me," Rae said.

She discussed how she developed her understanding of her legacy after she survived cancer. Her awareness of her legacy changed how she conducts her business and its intended audience.

"I knew that there was something different that my company had to offer," she shared. "In 2012 we underwent a slight rebrand, and now we are a consulting firm that helps women get businesses up and going."

After Rae's talk, Dr. Venky Venkalahalam, Dean of the Beacom

School of Business, presented winners of the i2i competition with their awards. In the high school "Dream It" track four teams received awards. For the college level "Build It", three awards were distributed. Only two businesses took home an award from the last track "Start It".

Award-winning journalist and speaker, Antonio Neves took the stage as the afternoon's last speaker.

"There's one key thing that determines who is going to succeed," Neves shared. "That something is called resilience. That something is called grit."

Neves described his childhood and challenges that he has overcome on the way to becoming the successful entrepreneur he is now. He reminded the audience to utilize the resources that they have.

"Most people are absolutely willing to help us with what we are working on," Neves said. "It is our responsibility to ask for that support."

Following the conference, organizers held an informal networking party upstairs at the Old Lumber Company. This was an opportunity to meet new people and hear about their business ideas. The conference gathered an excited audience from the surrounding states as well as a strong local attendance.

"I thought the core speakers were amazing," said Jesse Jastram, a Vermillion resident and employee of Dakota Beverage. "I'm glad I went. I feel more driven now."

TROVE, From Page 1A

Numb. They will receive \$1000 plus the professional services package.

Carter Larson, Gabe DeJong and Riley Johnson placed second with their product, the Ground Hog. They will receive \$750 plus the professional service package.

Devin O'Neil, Colton McNear, Shinayne Whipple and Joey Sweeney tied for third place with a team from Yankton High School. The Vermillion team presented 'EZ Brush' as their innovative product. They will receive a \$500 award plus a package of professional services to help further their product.

Team 'Spoil Alert' including Madison Abbott, Nicholas Lubbers, and Tristin Mallory also pulled off a great presentation despite Abbott not being able to attend due to illness.

This impressive group of freshman went up against four other teams from Yankton High School, including juniors and seniors.

"It's cool knowing that all the work we put in paid off," said Lavin, part of the winning 'Gum Numb' team.

All teams made a 10 minute presentation to three judges with five minutes for questions.

Students were required to know every aspect of their product from how much it cost to produce it to exactly how it compares to products already on the market.

"These are impressive

young people," one of the judges commented. "I wish I was thinking like that when I was in high school."

Teramie Hill and Carla McMurry-Kozak, teachers at Vermillion High School who led the teams said they couldn't be happier for their students.

"I feel like a proud mother hen, so does Carla," Hill said after the awards ceremony. "In reality they're the ones who did the work. We're just the ones who provided the structure."

Everyone seemed to feel a great deal of satisfaction at a successful competition, this being a first for all.

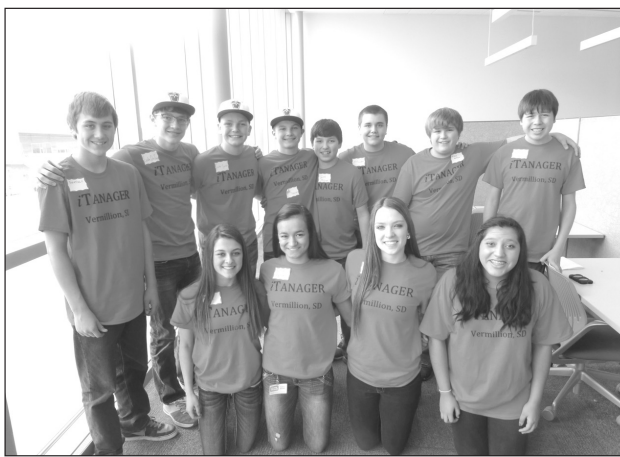
"This is the first year we've had a high school competition," said De Vee Dykstra, Professor of Business Law at USD and one of the organizers of the competition. "It's kind of an inaugural year."

"Last year they had a half-minute elevator pitch that some of the college students did and I think that's all they did," Dykstra said. "We kind of revamped it this year and said let's get the high schools involved. We hope to make it expanded to other high schools next year."

The competition was based on a TV show which shares the same name.

Whereas in the show the judges invest their own money and competitors are often required to negotiate with them to secure the desired funds, this competition was more one-sided.

"They have some investors as judges and of course they could enter into a contract with them and their



Four teams from Vermillion High School participated in the University of South Dakota's i2i Business Innovation Competition as an extension of their own Shark Tank project. Several groups plan on continuing to develop their products. SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

parents," Hill said. "They don't do the negotiation part. We have them pitch something for the sharks like we will give you a share in our company for however many dollars and they would break down what they would use that money for but there's no back and forth like in the show."

The presentation and collaboration aspect was more of what these teachers were going for in doing this project with the students.

"We're English based so we did more of the Common Core like informational texts, listening and speaking skills, writing skills, comparing and contrasting, persuading, and informational," Kozak said. "Others might be more economics based."

The high-school teams competed in a division of the competition dubbed 'Dream It'. This means the products being pitched were pre-prototype for the most part.

College-age students competed in the "Think

is exactly how the Vermillion High School students came up with the ideas for their products, according to them.

"I came up with our product," said Lubbers who was part of the 'Spoil Alert' group. "We were sitting in my kitchen trying to brainstorm ideas and my mom was saying that something she always wanted was a container that could tell her if the food was spoiled inside so we ended up using that idea."

Martin and her group, 'Gum Numb,' used family input as well.

"We have family members and friends that own dentistry and we talked to them and they've given us ideas and thoughts on what would be easiest for them," Martin said. "We've taken several different tools and put them into one. So instead of dentists having to use many different materials during a procedure or operation ours can cover all of that in one product."

Martin said her team has high hopes as they continue to the next phase.

"We're still working on how we'd make it and how we could make it cheaper than competing products," she said. "We're really interested in patenting our product. We've been looking into patents and how we could get that figured out and we would hope that investors, if they're interested, could help us to develop a patent and get it approved by the FDA. It could take up to 10 years to

get it."

"This project has worked really well," Hill said. "I've never had every single kid in every class turn in their project on time. It was amazing how motivated they were. We felt like this project if anything would help them understand that perseverance is so important in life."

Even for the groups that did not make it to the top, Hill said she considers them successful too and they could have a future for their products if they only are willing to put forth the effort.

"We tried to encourage them, and Nate Welch of the Vermillion Area Chamber & Development Company (VCDC) did too," Hill said. "If they're interested in taking their product to the next level they can get in contact with him and he will either help them or get them in contact with people who can. There were so many kids who had good ideas. This is just the tip of the iceberg."

Dykstra said she hopes they continue not only for their sake but for the sake of the community.

"That's growing our economy from the ground up," Dykstra said. "It can be done and it can be done by young people. You don't have to be any specific age to start your particular position. Just thinking what the needs are and helping to solve that. That's the exciting part. These kids have great ideas."

Alive Inside Alive Inside Alive Inside Alive Inside Alive Inside

Wednesday, April 8th, 6:30 pm
in the Kozak Community Room

MUSIC IS THE STRONGEST FORM OF MAGIC

Amazing and eye-opening documentary film **Alive Inside** comes to the library! The screening will be followed by a unique community discussion with the subject of the film, facilitated by Ariadne Albright of Sanford Arts Vermillion.

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