



sierra's STARS



Local student Abby Lewis wins national competition and receives real world business experience along the way.

Sometimes Father knows best. Just ask Abby Lewis. She recently competed in the Smith Barney/NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in New York City. Thanks to her father's advice, hard work, determination and a little coaching, Lewis won the competition and was awarded \$10,000.



Lewis found out in June that she made it to the national competition in New York City. The competition wasn't until October, but she started to prepare for it right away. Her YEK teacher and Smith Barney mentor helped her fine tune her presentation. Lewis says one thing that helped her prepare for the competition was to simply have people ask her questions about her business.

"I did this because, in competition, the judges get to ask questions at the end of your presentation," Lewis says. "I knew if I was able to answer all their questions that it would show how much I really knew my business."

Seventeen-year-old Lewis says she wasn't going to join the Youth Entrepreneurs of Kansas (YEK) class at school, but her father said it would be a good experience for her.

"I actually wasn't interested in joining YEK, but my dad insisted that I join because he wanted me to learn all about the business world," Lewis says. "He is a stockbroker for Edward Jones and he opened his own office and loved the experience, so he thought I might too. Turns out I did, and I loved the class."

Lewis, a senior at Kapaun Mt. Carmel, enrolled in YEK as a sophomore. The purpose of the class is to come up with a business and write a business plan for it. Her product, "The Scribbler," is a nail polish applicator that is similar to a marker. She says the idea came to her during one of her classes.

"Whenever I am bored in class, I draw marker or highlighter on my nails," she explains. "It just hit me as I was doing this that it would be so much more convenient if nail polish was in the same container as a marker."

Lewis said one of the great things about the YEK class is the focus on mentoring. Part of the YEK curriculum included professionals from different industries to help the students with their business plans and offer them advice.

"This was very beneficial. If they couldn't help you, they would give you a name of someone they knew that might be able to," she says. "They all really wanted our plans to succeed."

Her hard work paid off and Lewis took home first prize, \$10,000. It wasn't easy, and she learned a lot along the way.

"I could write a book on everything I learned from business, public speaking, time management, the importance of my family, inner-drive, perseverance, humility, etc.," she says. "I think one thing that really sticks out is that I never was the smartest girl in school, I am just average, but I found that if I set my mind to achieve something and really work at it, then I can succeed."

And succeed she did. "The Scribbler" is pending a patent, and once Lewis receives the patent, she hopes to sell the patent rights to a cosmetic company and retain a royalty fee.

As for future plans, Lewis said she definitely wants to go into business and especially enjoys the marketing industry, where she might be able to use her public speaking skills.

For now, Lewis will continue playing soccer competitively and working at the grill in the Derby Golf and Country Club.

Sometimes those "good experiences" turn out to be so much more. ➡

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