

SBDC Young Entrepreneurs Program Helps Ease Pain of Recession

By Nina Grooms Lee
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When Andrew Acda was 16, he came to a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) meeting with an idea for a business, because he had heard SBDC YEP might be able to help.

That was two years ago.

Today, after taking advantage of the SBDC YEP program's various services — including workshops, field trips, one-on-one consulting sessions with experienced business advisors and entrepreneurship conferences — Acda is now ready to launch his SECOND business.

Despite being named a co-winner of the annual SBDC YEP business plan contest, Acda still faced challenges getting his business off the ground in the midst of a recession. But those difficulties helped teach him the most valuable lesson an entrepreneur can learn — don't give up.

Acda didn't give up, and as a result he and his business partner, Christian Lopes, are now focused on launching their second business idea, a sports accessories company called IndexOne.

Since the SBDC YEP program was started in 2007, more than 700 young people between the ages of 14 and 27 have participated. Along the way they've realized that entrepreneurship can be a viable career path, while learning how to think and act entrepreneurially in everything they do.

The SBDC YEP program is funded by the California Community Colleges Economic and Workforce Development program and hosted by the College of the Canyons. SBDC YEP was started in response to survey studies that indicated that more than half of all 14 to 27-year-olds wanted to start a business.

With a suite of resources targeted towards young entrepreneurs, the YEP program provides aspiring entrepreneurs with the skills and resources needed to help them start and grow their businesses — giving participants a helpful head-start in their business ventures, while simultaneously having a positive impact on the local economy.

Through partnerships with other colleges and universities, area high schools, youth organizations and small business owners throughout the region, SBDC YEP has been able to reach a growing number of business-minded young people throughout the Santa Clarita, Antelope and San Fernando Valleys.

Notable 2010 SBDC YEP events included the Dream and Discover Entrepreneurship Conference and the Real Business in Action field trip series that featured visits to Santa Clarita area businesses including Six Flags Magic Mountain, Mechanix Wear, The Bernod Group and Maria Elena's Authentic Latino food.

During each field trip YEP participants were given an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of the business location, and provided an opportunity to ask questions and learn key lessons associated with each business or industry.

Although SBDC YEP has not been immune to California's budget crisis, 2011 promises to be another impactful year for the program thanks to a new partnership with the Business & Entrepreneurship Center at Cuesta College, and continued support from College of the Canyons.

This year's SBDC YEP calendar of events — which will be released during the YEP spring kickoff meeting in February — includes workshops, one-on-one counseling opportunities, the annual Dream and Discover Entrepreneurship Conference, a business/marketing plan contest, field trips and much more.

For more information about SBDC Young Entrepreneurs Program (SBDC YEP) please call (661) 362-5900, email sbdc@canyons.edu or visit www.cocsbdc.org.