

Dimensions of living

Olympic-sized ideas from savvy students

Smithtown Children's Foundation reaps benefits from this year's high school business competition

BY MICHELLE CENTAMORE

Students participating in this year's Smithtown School District's Business Olympics not only got to test their business savvy skills, they also learned an important lesson when it comes to serving community. Now in its 19th year, the business olympics offers students the opportunity to research, plan and implement a business plan, complete with marketing, financing and public relations, for a predetermined business.

This year, the teams from both Smithtown High School East and Smithtown West were charged with raising community awareness for the Smithtown Children's Foundation, a local charity that provides financial and emotional support to children and families within the Smithtown community. Specific tasks of participating teams included planning an annual fundraising event, as well as creating a PowerPoint presentation, a public service announcement and promotional materials. Of about 60 teams with an average of four students per team, it was Smithtown High School East student team, "Anchors Away" - Hope Lefko, Amanda Stoerback, Spencer Ochs and Gabby Donnelly - which took home the gold and skills and experience that will last a lifetime. The first place winners received \$50 and two Mets tickets each.

Students who participate in the Business Olympics "gain experience in tackling a real-world situation and putting to use the skills that they've learned in our business classes," said Mary Pat Grafstein, Work Based Learning & Internship Coordinator, Smithtown High School and Executive Director of the Smithtown Industry Advisory Board.

According to Ms. Grafstein, all students must create marketing plans and use both their organizational and teamwork skills in order to accomplish all of the requirements, including the final presentation. Students also learn proper business attire among other lessons in professionalism.

The final event was an all-day affair where former teachers and school district personnel, school board members, teachers union officials, local business owners and Industry Advisory Board members served as judges. The student teams were judged on various criteria including overall presentation skills, appearance, PowerPoint presentation, marketing and promotional materials, their Public Service Announcement, and feasibility of their fundraiser. The

best seven teams from this preliminary round presented again that evening on the stage of the 500 seat auditorium in front of all of their peers, judges, and families.

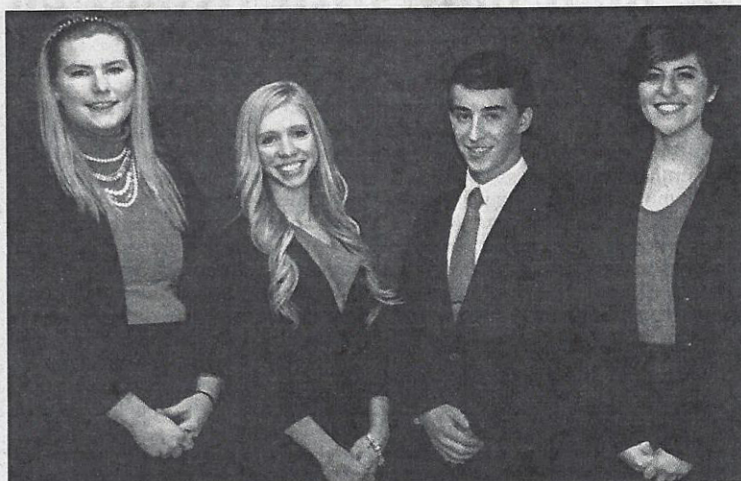
The team who won, best met the criteria given to the judges, according to Ms. Grafstein. "Anchors Away," offered an excellent presentation... they hit the mark on all areas asked for in the scoring rubric," Ms. Grafstein said. The winning team was noted for its polished presentation, as well as their professional dress, their fundraising ideas, which included encouraging community participation, a Smithtown Children's Foundation Awareness month, a PowerPoint presentation that showed their proven understanding of the organization's mission and goals and a PSA that featured financial statistics. In addition, the students created a new logo for SCF to make others aware that the organization assists individuals and families of all ages - not just children.

"From my standpoint, it was so moving and great to see what the student's perception of the Smithtown Children's Foundation (SCF) was," said Christine Fitzgerald, Executive Director of the Smithtown Children's Foundation. She added many of the students had a personal connection to SCF.

Ms. Fitzgerald said she was so impressed by the tremendous effort and creativity on part of all the teams. "And, all of the Public Service Announcements were amazing in their own right, too," said Ms. Fitzgerald. "One team went around their school and recorded students and teachers saying 'We support the Smithtown Children's Foundation'" and another involved a team which publicly recognized the foundation as a "puzzle" in which the pieces are "the members of our community," she recalled.

Some of the teams had great promotional item ideas, too, said Ms. Fitzgerald, noting that some showcased sample promotional items in their presentations. "Some of the teams actually coordinated their clothes to wear matching ties and shirts," she said. "I also enjoyed the team whose idea was to host fundraisers that revolved around the latest trends... their current trend idea was 'Looms for Love' where stations were set up and they wanted Girl Scouts to get involved. They even created a Girl Scout patch and they actually contacted the Girl Scouts about it... they did some of the legwork for us!"

"There were so many wonderful presentations and Public Service



Business Olympic winners team Anchors Away (from left) Hope Lefko, Amanda Stoerback, Spencer Ochs and Gabby Donnelly.

Announcements that all of them won in my book," Ms. Fitzgerald said. "For days after the event, my head was spinning with all of the possibilities of new fundraising ideas and ways to enact them." For SCF, "this was probably the single best marketing campaign ever and an event I will remember fondly for a very long time," she said. "I find it amazing that this feat was accomplished by 14 to 18 year olds. I could go on and on. I am so pleased to know that our future is in

good hands if these students are any indication," she said."

The Business Olympics is run in conjunction with the Smithtown Schools Industry Advisory Board. Sponsorships came from Advisory Board Members. The main sponsor for the past three years has been People's United Bank which donated \$2750.

To learn more about the Smithtown Children's Foundation, call (516) 835-1219 or visit www.smithtownchildrensfoundation.com.

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