

Youth Entrepreneurship Program

# Turning students' ideas into businesses

John Lafford looked around Sackville, N. B., and saw there was a need for a window washing business. With the help of a new program, the *Youth Entrepreneurship Program*, he was able to find out how to turn his idea into a business. "The program is a great motivator. It really shows you how to get started," he says.

We're hearing a lot about entrepreneurs these days. Entrepreneurs are important to Canada's future. They are the creative people who are opening new businesses and providing jobs for others. The provincial and federal governments want entrepreneurs to succeed. That's why they have come up with the *Student Entrepreneurship Initiative*.

The program is very unusual. Under it, 82 university and community college students in New Brunswick were hired last summer to learn how to be entrepreneurs.

The young people taking part in the program had to start by coming up with an idea for a business they would like to open. Then, they did research to find out whether or not people in their area would buy the product they were selling or use the service they were offering.

Next, they had to figure out how to convince people to buy from them. This could be done through advertising or salesmanship. They also had to learn how to manage the finances of the business and solve all of the problems that could arise.

It takes spirit to be an entrepreneur. But, it also takes money, planning and training to start a business and that's where the program comes in.

Jorge Lamas of Fredericton was one of the students who took the program. Because of it, he's now in business for real. Jorge is still a student part-time, but he's also opening up a language school for people from Spain to come to New Brunswick and learn English.

"I'll start with 150 students," Jorge says. "but, I hope to have 1,000 students some day. I had the idea for a school when I went into the program. The program helped me plan and make my idea work. It gave me the maturity I needed."

In the meantime, he decided to open another business at the end of February. At *Café Olé!* he serves coffee and pastries in a smoke-free atmosphere.

Leann Collings, also of Fredericton, went into the program because she wanted to learn how to set up and run her own chartered accounting service.

"There's no university course that teaches you how to prepare a business plan like this program does," says Leann, who is in her third year of university to become a chartered accountant.

David Clark of Campbellton used what he learned in the program to open a summer business selling t-shirts and caps customized with company names or festival logos. He made a profit. David says he liked the program because it wasn't all classroom learning. Students went into the business community to see how things are done.

Students Brian Benwell and Shawn Geraghty from the Campbellton program teamed up and opened a small business doing odd jobs for the summer. They learned how to market their skills, manage money and plan their day-to-day workload.

Says Brian: "It seemed like a simple enough business idea. But, the program showed us even a simple idea takes a lot of good planning if it's going to work."

Hartland resident Marnie Hatfield says the program taught her that if she wants to succeed in her own business, there are two things you must guarantee customers: quality and good service. "We spent a lot of time visiting businesses," she says. "I learned that if you don't have good quality and you don't treat your custom-



Jorge Lamas owns *Café Olé!* in downtown Fredericton serving coffee and pastries in a smoke-free atmosphere.

ers right, your business won't last."

It takes courage and dreams to be an entrepreneur. It also takes careful planning and hard work. The Student Entrepreneurship Program is showing young people how to put all these things together to come up with their own business success stories.

During the first summer, the students are paid to learn the fundamentals of starting a business. The following summer, they are

encouraged to actually start a business based on what they learned. Programs such as the Student Venture Capital Program offered by the Department of Advanced Education and Labor can give students some financial help in getting started.

It's one of several programs under the Canada/New Brunswick COOPERATION Agreement on Entrepreneurship and Human Resource Development. The

agreement is between the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Employment and Immigration Canada, the provincial Department of Advanced Education and Labor and New Brunswick's Regional Development Corporation.

For more information on the Youth Entrepreneurship Program or other programs under the COOPERATION agreement, phone the Co-ordinator of the Agreement Secretariat, at 444-4124.

## You're never too young to start a business

You're never too young to start thinking about being an entrepreneur. That's how Ross Darling feels. He's a professor of marketing and entrepreneurship at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton.

Some of Darling's university students have taken part in an exciting event called the Small Business Proposal Awards. Teams of students come up with an idea for a business they could open, then they must develop the plans to actually start the business. Funds to run the competition and provide cash prizes to winners have come from the Canada/New Brunswick COOPERATION Agreement on Industrial Development.

But, Darling says people should not wait until they're in university to start thinking like an entrepreneur. "You have to start young," he says.

Entrepreneurs are those clever, daring and hard-working people who have a great idea for a business and, after careful planning, actually open one and run

it. In the 1990s, we're hearing more and more about entrepreneurs. Governments say these are the people who will be the backbone of our country's business and industrial future.

Entries in the Small Business Proposal Awards are judged by members of the business community, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency and the New Brunswick Department of Economic Development and Tourism. University and community college students are eligible to enter.

Darling says the agencies are doing a lot to encourage more people to become entrepreneurs. And, events like the Small Business Proposal Awards are helping to get young people, who are the business people of tomorrow, excited about developing their own ideas and running their own companies.

What does it take to be an entrepreneur? Darling says it starts with an idea. "You have to sit back and say to yourself: 'Gee, I wish I had this! Gee, I wish I could do that!'"

The "this" or "that" which you can't find to buy is the very thing that, perhaps, other people also want. There's your opportunity. From that idea, Darling says you have to prepare a careful business plan to get started and to be successful.

One of his students was concerned about the environment, so he came up with an idea for a company that would recycle old car tires. Another student who enjoys outdoor sports had an idea to sell packs of food rations similar to the ones the army uses for troops in the field. There's no end to the ideas that will make an entrepreneur.

Darling says young people can start business ventures that can make extra money for themselves or their school. He suggests students interested in entrepreneurship should start business clubs and have marketing teachers or members of the business community work with them on ideas.

One way to test your business savvy is to enter a competition. The COOPERATION Agreement on Industrial Development ends

March 31, 1993, but on April 1, the new Canada/New Brunswick COOPERATION Agreement on Entrepreneurship and Human Resource Development comes into effect.

Under the new agreement between ACOA, the provincial Department of Advanced Education and Labor, Employment and Immigration Canada and New Brunswick's Regional Development Corporation, a contest similar to the Small Business Proposal Awards will be adopted by a new program called the CASE Competition. Teams of university and community college students are encouraged to enter.

There are nine separate programs under the new agreement, each dealing with a different aspect of entrepreneurship or human resource development. The program the CASE Competition comes under encourages young people to consider entrepreneurship as a career choice.

Students and/or professors who are interested in setting up a competition may contact Gail Moser, ACOA, (506) 452-3155.