

Business plan winners lauded

BY SMALL BUSINESS BC

Small Business BC (SBBC) held its Fifth Annual Business Plan Contest Awards Ceremony on Feb. 26. First, second and third place in two contest categories, Business Start-Up and Business Growth, were awarded. The contest is a free, provincewide competition open to all new and existing small businesses.

The six finalists, chosen from 170 entries, will share prizes and in-kind donations valued at \$40,000. Judges noted the quality, diversity, ingenuity and creativity of finalists' plans were impressive, demonstrating the increasing strength of B.C.'s small business sector.

Start Up Category

First place went to North Vancouver's James Shearer and his company Peragro Media. Shearer's cross-Canada travel blog became the launching pad for his website www.trailcanada.com, Canada's largest on-line travel guide with 2.1million visitors per year. Shearer also started Canada Events, www.canadaevents.ca, a website dedicated to Canadian events and entertainment.

Second place was awarded to Teena Legris of Vancouver. Legris is the owner and director of Nima'ma Maternity Wear, www.nimama.ca, a unique maternity clothing retail outlet which will open the first week of April at 2938 West Fourth Avenue (at Bayswater) in the heart of Kitsilano. Nima'ma Maternity Wear will cater to new moms looking for higher-end professional maternity wear and eco-friendly clothing and beauty products.

Abbotsford's MacStewart Brewery, asbev@telus.net, was awarded third place. The three partners have combined their considerable talents to launch MacStewart Brewery: Art Hornal, Michael Stewart and Graham Syme. Hornal, president of marketing, has been in the food services business for over 30 years. Brewmaster Stewart was instrumental in creating the Shaftsbury brand and Syme is in charge of sales for the company. Hornal says initially the company will focus on B.C. sales, but plans to take their product across Canada and into the U.S. market. The company is in the final stages of financing and expects to be in production by mid-2008.

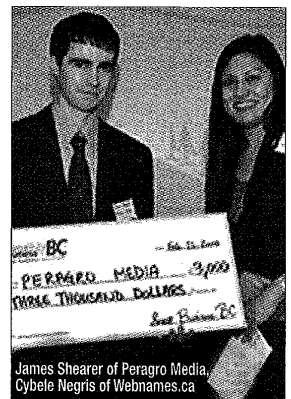
Growth Category

First place went to Linda Aquilini and Reaghan Gasparre, co-owners and founders of Monkey's Playhouse Early Learning Childcare Centre, www.monkeyplayhouse.ca. Founded in 2002, Monkey's Playhouse is a quality childcare facility for children aged 0 - 12 years. The company's first centre was opened in Port Moody, and has since expanded with two more locations in Coquitlam and Kelowna, with another centre soon to open in Kelowna's Westbank. Motivation to start Monkey's Playhouse grew out of a desire to create an educationally focused, child-centered and family friendly environment. "We go above and beyond," says partner/owner Aquilini, "not only with the children but also with their families."

Lambda Solutions, www.lambdasolutions.net, of Vancouver took second place. Lambda provides eLearning outsource services to a wide range of businesses. The company's owner and founder Shevy Levy says the company will soon launch a new product enabling small and medium-size companies to

rapidly develop online courses. Levy says the product will provide easy access to systems and infrastructure for building online courses and developing content with an eCommerce component allowing users to market, sell and invoice for content and programs. Levy is hopeful the system will become a central hub for online learning, "an education marketplace for companies of all sizes."

Campbell River's Leah Tremain is the owner and founder of Tremain Media Inc., www.readtv.com, third place finalist in the growth category. Founded in 2004, Tremain Media Inc. creates and distributes educational media, including a series of DVDs aimed at helping parents and children engage in early learning together. In addition to her "Read-TV" and "I Love When You Read" series, Tremain is currently in production with a numeracy series, "I Love When We Count." The new series will help to open up the world of numbers for parents and children while preparing them for the new math concepts being introduced into the B.C. curriculum.



Small Business BC is already looking ahead to the Sixth Annual Business Plan Contest. "We are very pleased with the growth and success of the Business Plan Contest," says SBBC Communication Manager, Candice Malcalino. "The next contest will see a new "presentation" component where finalists will have an opportunity to present a 10-minute business plan 'pitch' to judges, following which judges will have an opportunity to pose questions to finalists."

To learn more about the contest visit, www.bizplancontest.ca. 