



KATIE LLOYD,
WHISK CONFECTIONERIES BY KATIE

Start at the beginning: Youth entrepreneurs turn ideas into business

BY OLIVIA RUTT

WELLINGTON COUNTY - From marketing to connecting with clients to managing finances, owning a small business requires entrepreneurs to wear many hats. With the Summer Company program, seven Wellington County youth entrepreneurs took the opportunity to turn their ideas into businesses.

Summer Company, a provincial grant program, awards students aged 15 to 29 up to \$3,000 and gives hands on business training and mentorship.

Olga George-Cosh, a business advisor with the Business Centre Guelph-Wellington and Summer Company lead for Guelph and Wellington County participants, said this program is valuable to both participants and the community.

She said it is an experimental program that provides students with “the opportunity to identify if they have the skills and the characteristics of being entrepreneurs if they want to pursue entrepreneurship as a future career, so they do experience running a business hands on.”

It gives the students a real-world application of what it means to be in business. George-Cosh said the students help the broader economy as well.

“It enhances the community a great deal because those are the future business people of their respective communities,” she said.

“Because it is funded by the provincial government, it is an opportunity to invest in your future entrepreneurs early on.”

George-Cosh said the program teaches the students business skills such as self-motivation, time management, sales, budgeting and more.

It’s these skills that helped Camilla Branchley, 21, of Arkell, to make her hobby into a business.

Her business, Camilla B. Photography and Brand Design (www.camillab.co), stems from

mixing her passion for photography with her ongoing business degree from the University of Guelph. Without the program, Branchley said she wouldn’t have started her business so soon. She specializes in taking commercial photographs for branding and social media for small businesses.

“... when I heard about this program, it kind of pushed me to ... start it right now.”

- CAMILLA BRANCHLEY,
CAMILLA B. PHOTOGRAPHY



“This company was kind of my long-term goal because I’ve always been into photography and since I’m doing business in school, I’d always thought to myself, when I graduate, when I’m older, I’ll merge the two and start a business,” she said.

“But when I heard about this program, it kind of pushed me to why not do it right now and start it right now,” she said.

Fusing passion and education was difficult for Branchley.

“Turning it from a hobby to a business was a lot harder than I expected it to be,” she said.

“You have to be way more organized with it, you have to think about financials, you have to do everything, you have to be the finance person, you have to be the sales person, the marketing person, so turning it from a little hobby that I love to do into this actual business was a big switch for me and it was a bit of a challenge.”

Branchley said the Summer Company program and the Business Centre helped her along the way, especially with topics she was struggling with.

“Financials. I would not have been able to figure that out without their help ... they kind of pushed me to figure it out and I learned so much about that, and I think I really got it,” she said.

It has also given her confidence.

“I always consider myself an introvert, so I never really thought I would just be able to walk into a company that I really admire and be able to get a sale out of it,” she said.

“So I found my approach that I would go in and just talk to the owner and get to know them on a personal level and kind of talk about their business, not really about sales, and build a relationship that way and through that, I was able to get quite a few clients.”

Katie Lloyd, 18, of Fergus, said the support system was very helpful in getting her business Whisk Confectioneries by Katie (facebook.com/WhiskByKatie) off the ground.

She makes baked goods and has been participating in markets and pop-up shops. She has been using Facebook to garner traffic to her pop-up shops, which has kept her very busy.

“It’s actually been a lot busier than I expected,” said Lloyd.

“I didn’t really have very many expectations

PHOTOS: OLIVIA RUTT



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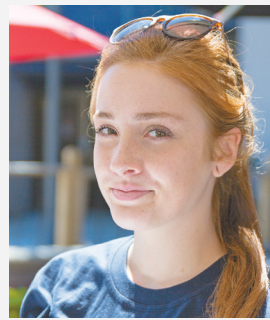
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CAMERON BAGULEY



KATIE PLUME

when it came to the business. I had some sort of clientele before, but since starting the Facebook page and stuff like that, it's been a huge increase."

Summer Company has taught her to network.

"It is so important, especially in culinary, to know other people," said Lloyd.

Katie Plume, 20, of Mount Forest, who produces handmade pottery for her business KP Pottery (facebook.com/kppotterystudio), also valued the connection with others.

"The biggest difficulties that I faced were with self-organization. They were able to teach me some strategies and computer programs to overcome those issues," said Plume.

"The best things that I learned were organizational and professional communication skills."

While many of the students were attracted to the \$3,000 grant when applying for the

programs, most saw the mentorship as the top benefit.

"My experience with the Summer Company has been nothing but positive. I've got great mentoring and advice from people who really know what they're doing and who truly care about helping expand my business," said Samuel Cross, 16, of Puslinch.

In his business, Cross Custom Knives (crosscustomknives.com), he starts with a bar of steel and forges into shape a custom knife.

Brenchley agreed the mentorship was a bonus.

"I think it's nice just to be able to meet with someone and be able to talk about things ... to be able to have a meeting set up, where I can actually just talk about my business, and the whole conversation is based around that, she can give me advice that's unbiased," she said.

"I would definitely recommend this program, not even just for the money, I mean

obviously that's a bonus, but the amount of things that I've learned, the connections I've made."

Lloyd also recommends the program to other youths thinking about starting a business.

"Just make sure the business becomes your baby and that you understand that business isn't just you sitting around. You have to do things to work; you have to work for things," she said.

Other summer students from Wellington County include:

- Ben Vanderstam, 18, of Guelph-Eramosa, who created Big and Small Grass Cutting;
- Clayton Harvey, 17, of Guelph-Eramosa, who created Two Strapping Lads; and
- Cameron Baguley, 17, of Ariss, who created CB Music Productions.

To learn more about summer company visit ontario.ca/page/start-summer-company-students.

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CAMILLA B. PHOTOGRAPHY

