

BTEC entrepreneurial program's success leads to Expansion in coming fall semester

By LISA PEARSON , The Bristol Press

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BRISTOL -- Mike Daley is graduating from high school today at Bristol Technical Education Center. Graduate isn't his only new title. He is also now an entrepreneur and a business co-owner, thanks to the success of a new program offered at the school.

Financial Program Strategies Inc. of Waterbury worked in conjunction with BTEC to bring a six-week entrepreneurial seminar to seven of the school's students. Part of the company's Road to Riches Program, students learned valuable lessons from seminar leader Richard Giannamore, including using integrity, teamwork and risk in business.



Photo by Rob Macfarlane

Daley, 18, said the most important idea that he took with him from the seminar was "being a 10." "You have to show that you're in a good mood and that you're happy to be working," Daley said.

Originally, the seven volunteer students were each going to develop their own businesses. After that seemed unlikely, two groups were formed to create their own businesses. One team developed a hot dog stand and the other, a lemonade stand.

"I figured we should stick with something pretty simple. It wasn't really about the business, but about how to manage the business," Daley said.

Bill Thompson, 37, also graduating today, was in charge of the hot dog stand, which he said he created because of the low start-up costs.

The groups sold their lemonade and hot dogs during school lunches, at school activities and during one of the seminars. Both groups said they profited slightly, but neither group was sure if the businesses would continue throughout the summer.

"People were getting antsy, with school being over now, and I didn't want to do it by myself. That's difficult to do, when you're carting around a wooden stand," Daley added. This first experience was a good one, overall, according to Daley, who would like to open a diesel mechanic business in the future. "I think, ultimately what I learned is that opening a business is really either sink or swim," added Daley.

"This course really taught me to work through any emotional roadblocks, such as making excuses for not working," Thompson said.

Byron Waterman, principal of BTEC, said that although the vocational/technical school system in Connecticut is known to provide excellent hands-on experience, it doesn't typically address the skills needed to be a successful business owner.

"What was needed was something that focused on skills that related to people, and to handling the obstacles that come up in the business world, especially for a business just starting up," said Waterman, who went on to say that the program will create a new measure of success for high school students throughout the state.

In fact, BTEC and the Road to Riches program believe results of the pilot program were so beneficial that the seminar will be expanded to the fall for students from both Bristol and outside.