

Press Release  
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**Questions?**

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**Winners announced in business plan competition**

On Friday March 7, 2008, five finalists in the Northeast Wisconsin Business Plan competition took their turns standing before a judging panel. With a maximum of 15 minutes on the clock, each competitor explained why their business plan should be deemed the winner of the contest. The five finalists were selected from a group of 42 entries from throughout northeast Wisconsin.

Kurt Hahlbeck of Wipfli LLC, who has been a judge in the competition for all three years, noted the quality of the pool of plans submitted. "The overall quality of the plans submitted has improved significantly over the past three years," said Hahlbeck. "I was very impressed with all of the plans this year."

A lot was at stake. Their placement after the final round was to determine the distribution of \$25,000 in prize money which is to be used to put the business plan into action within one year of its receipt. After the presentations were completed, the scores were tabulated. The presentation scores were then combined with the scores from the executive summaries and business plans submitted by each of the finalists. The following results were announced:

The first place prize of \$10,000 was awarded to GreenList LLC, owned by Ryan Soletski and Marc Kostac of Brown County. GreenList is a flat-fee real estate firm looking to serve Northeast Wisconsin by offering a restaurant-style menu of services from a basic listing package to an ala carte list of services. Flat-fee real estate firms offer an alternative to commission-based real estate pricing models. GreenList will offer services to both sellers and buyers, and will begin their business by concentrating in Green Bay and then expanding to other areas in Northeast Wisconsin.

Soletski and Kostac noted during their presentation that they felt their business plan was relevant in today's marketplace. "We are offering an alternative that can save consumers in the home market a lot of money," said Kostac, "and it is a positive alternative because it keeps the money in the hands of the sellers and buyers."

Speaking about being named the winners of the competition, the best friends and business partners thanked the organizers and sponsors of the competition. "We are totally excited," said Soletski. "The people that will benefit most are the consumers in the area taking part in real estate transactions."

The second place prize of \$6,000 was awarded to Great Choice Condominium Management LLC, owned by sisters Mary Jones of Appleton and Nancy Johnson of Manawa. Great Choice is a full service independent condominium management company offering financial, maintenance and communication services. Their target market is condominium associations and developers in Outagamie, Winnebago, Waupaca and Calumet counties.

Services offered by Great Choice will include collecting fees, following up on delinquencies, accounting reports, inspection of grounds, board meeting minutes, coordinating mailings and sending out newsletters.

The pair sees mature condominium associations as potential customers. "Volunteers in these associations may be aging and growing weary of their responsibilities on the association boards," said Jones.

The third place of \$4,000 was awarded to StoneCroft Galleries LLC owned by Kaethe Gutierrez of Brown County. StoneCroft Galleries will include a gallery and gift shop centering on fiber arts, and will be located at the gateway to Door County, just across from Bay Beach Park in Green Bay. The business, however, is more than just a shop and gallery. One mission of StoneCroft Galleries is to educate the public about the inspirational progression of the use of traditional materials from early American quilts to modern wall art and sculptures as well as develop an awareness of the historic and modern craft of fiber arts. Various arts classes are included as part of the business plan.

The fourth place prize of \$3,000 was awarded to VenturePORT, LLC owned by Tracy Buzzell and Todd Hanson. VenturePORT is a division of the Catalyst Performance Group of Appleton and is an online community that connects entrepreneurs with other entrepreneurs and valuable resources. The software used was co-developed with a New York firm with the goal of replacing the "sneaker-net" of pounding the pavement to find the right connections for emerging businesses. The site contains resources such as a marketplace, blogs, videos and podcasts, event calendars and a newsletter. The owners take pride that the site was developed by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs and connects them through "Facebook-like" functionality.

The fifth place prize of \$2,000 was awarded to Carmel Crisp and Café in Oshkosh owned by Chanda Anderson. Carmel Crisp first opened in Oshkosh in 1933, and has been known for its caramel corn and homemade confections. The business was purchased by Anderson's mother 20 years ago, but was recently closed. Anderson's plan calls for Carmel Crisp and Café to reopen in a new location in downtown Oshkosh and expand the confection business to include a café which serves sandwiches, salads, soups and Chicago-style hot dogs. Anderson has many plans for expansion which may include new locations, gift baskets and wholesale opportunities. Anderson's business mantra is a simple one – "I want to make people happy."

Business plans are a critical tool in the proper planning and launch of new ventures and are the preferred mode of communication between entrepreneurs, innovators and potential investors. The goal of the Northeast Wisconsin Business Plan Competition is to encourage the preparation of business plans for start-up businesses, making significant changes to existing businesses, or launching new products in northeast Wisconsin.

Sponsors of the Northeast Wisconsin Business Plan competition include The Northeast Wisconsin Regional Economic Partnership (NEWREP); Alliant Energy; Dominion; Fox Valley Workforce Development Board; Fox Valley Technical College; Lakeshore Technical College; Moraine Park Technical College; New North; Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; We Energies; Wisconsin Public Service; UW-Oshkosh Center for Community Partnerships and UW-Oshkosh College of Business.