

# Making their pitch

*Aspiring entrepreneurs vie for exposure in business contest*



*Assumption students Christian D'Agnillo, left, and Zaheem Riberdy display the merchandise of their entrepreneurial aspirations: drones that take aerial video and still photos, and customized clothing like shoes and hats.*

(Windsor, Ontario, March 30, 2015) – Being a little obsessive has served Zaheem Riberdy well.

A Grade 11 student at Assumption College Catholic High School, Riberdy has launched his own a business which combines his indisputable creativity with his taste for cleanliness.

“I just hate dirty shoes,” explains Riberdy, whose enterprise Kustom Kicks involves customizing refurbished articles of clothing like shoes and hats, and turning them into works of art for his clients.

The idea came to him when he was working a summer job as a mechanic. His work shoes were getting dirty, so rather than buy a new pair, he just spray-painted them. He gradually started getting more creative, painting a variety of designs on other pairs of his own shoes.

“People started to notice and asked if I could do the same thing to their shoes,” he said, adding that he’s done about a dozen pairs now for paying customers. One of his more creative endeavours is a pair of basketball shoes which has vintage comic strips glued and lacquered on them.

A student of Jeremy Bracken’s business and marketing class, Riberdy is one of a group of students who are competing in a province-wide competition they hope will give their ideas a much-needed infusion of exposure to take them to the next level.

The *Young Entrepreneurs, Make Your Pitch* competition – supported by the Ontario Centres of Excellence and the Ministry of Economic Development – invites high school students to pitch their business ideas in two-minute videos, which are judged through online public voting and expert judges’ scores.

Twenty finalists will win a trip to Toronto to pitch their ideas live at OCE’s Discovery conference and showcase, April 27-28, in front of a panel of judges from the entrepreneur community. Based on the live pitches, the judges select six winners who win reserved entry into the Summer Company program, a \$750 education voucher from Desire2Learn, and other cool prizes.

One of the other Assumption groups in the contest is a team that uses aerial drones to make high quality video, photographs, and virtual maps for everyone from real estate agents trying to market large pieces of commercial property to festival organizers who want great shots to capture the scope of their events.

“A lot of these people just don’t have access to high quality aerial shots,” explained Jacob Schwab, a member of the Drone’s Eye View team, which also includes Christian D’Agnillo, Yousuf Al-Yousufi, and Jakov Novak.

CEO and founder D’Agnillo said the business is a capital-intensive one, so winning the contest would provide them with some exposure that could lead to new investment.

“We’d like to buy some new higher end equipment, and we have to do a lot of traveling to get to the locations where we have to shoot,” he said.

The other business from Assumption entered in the contest is 3-Axis Printing, a 3-D printing company led by Schwab.

Bracken said he genuinely believes all of the entries are top-quality business ideas, and that the contest has taught his students that a great business idea is only a start.

“A lot of people have great ideas, but making it happen is all together different,” he said. “You need a real skill set to transfer those ideas in to a tangible business.”

You can view the videos, which were created by fellow student Damon Char, and cast your ballots for all of the businesses at the following links:

Kustom Kicks: <http://www.makeyourpitch.ca/entry/21897815-Kustom-Kicks?offset=2&sort=upload%20DESC&channel=26949>

Drone's Eye View: <http://www.makeyourpitch.ca/entry/21882379-Drone%27s-Eye-View?offset=8&sort=upload%20DESC&channel=26949>

3-Axis Printing: <http://www.makeyourpitch.ca/entry/21882367-3-Axis-Printing?offset=9&sort=upload%20DESC&channel=26949>