

Gaining Economic Fuel

Kyle Visser/For the Times-Standard
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I was one of eight Economic Fuel finalists in April of this year. I own a business locally called Shred Tec. Our service is picking up and shredding confidential documents. It was through Economic Fuel that I was able to fine tune the direction of my business to better serve my customers and to provide more opportunity for my employees. Many of us are familiar with some of the involvement the Arkleys have with our local community but I would like to inform you specifically of Economic Fuel.

Economic Fuel is a competition for college students dedicated to starting their own business. Each team sets out to prepare a written business plan including sections about the target market, industry analysis, marketing plan and the impact this business will have on Humboldt County. Unlike other competitions, there are a total of eight winners; half of these businesses are first place and are awarded \$25,000 each.

This offers competitors an opportunity to lower their guard a bit and learn from one another because everyone is a winner. During my involvement in the competition I observed judges who read 37 business plans, unpaid, some traveling all the way from Fortuna to judge presentations late into the evening. In addition to the \$117,000 of funding provided, there are also people like Kathy Miller, who are employed year round to work on this competition. It is very refreshing to see professionals at the peak of their career volunteering their time to help the business men and women of tomorrow.

When I started this competition nine months ago I thought I knew my business, but I now realize that I had only scratched the surface. I now have an in-depth understanding of not just how my business works, but how it functions in the market, and the real impact it is having and will continue to have on our local community.

I really look up to what the Arkleys are doing. People have a tendency to put a bad light on big business; when I look at the fruits of what they do in our community, I am so grateful to have them in Humboldt County. It is my goal to run my business in a similar manner, obviously on a much smaller scale for now, but to bring money from out of the area to our community, take care of my employees, and look for ways of doing good. We should all look to their example in running a business and taking care of our community.

I have been honored in the opportunity to participate in Economic Fuel and would like to thank the Arkleys for all they do in our community and for contributing to my Economic Fuel.

Kyle Visser resides in McKinleyville.