

Planting Seeds of Entrepreneurship

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Hannah Pavelka, age 10 sells beeswax candles and yo-yo balloons

About a dozen members of the E-ship Entrepreneurship club for young people recently showcased their businesses in an expo at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Ranging from 6 to 14 years old, the youngsters displayed and sold handmade products that included baked goods, dog treats and jewelry. Some of the more unusual items were wallets and purses made from duct tape.

A group of students and volunteers from UNO's International Professional Development program, which helps young professionals from outside of the United States develop business skills, attended to give feedback to the E-ship members. "The club's purpose is to prepare children to own their own businesses," said Janita Pavelka, the club's organizer. "The event allowed the participants, all home-schooled, to gain experience talking about their businesses in order to promote and sell their products. The best way to learn is hands-on."

Twelve-year-old Paul Fox sold wallets that he made from colored duct tape, along with his origami creations. Origami is the traditional Japanese art of paper folding. Paul's business is called the Duct Tape Shack. Paul said he was inspired to try to make money from his hobbies because of the business owners he met at E-ship Club meetings. "I just like making stuff," he said. "And duct tape is pretty cheap, and you can make a lot of stuff with it." He said it took 30 cents' worth of tape to make a change holder, which he sells for \$1.50. All his products cost from 50 cents

to \$3. The expo marked the first time Paul tried to sell his creations to people other than friends or family members. He said he learned how to log his inventory and sales through his involvement with the club.

Business owners attend club meetings to talk about different aspects of running a business. Pavelka said it is important to get children involved with entrepreneurship at a young age so they have the courage and confidence to become business owners as adults. "It (the expo) gives them that little boost. They make a few sales and feel good about it. Children are prime candidates for creating business ideas because they have less fear of rejection and other people's opinions," Pavelka said. "They also have many ideas. The sky's the limit, and there's not a dumb idea."

Pavelka's four children were among those at the expo selling their products, which included baked goods, jewelry, soap and beeswax candles. Amany, 8, started A's Seed Money, which sells sunflower seeds grown in South Dakota. Like Pavelka's other children, she donates 10 percent of her profits to charity. Amany had business cards and fliers about her business at her display area. She said she and her siblings help each other with their businesses. The family even has a Web site that promotes their various businesses. □

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