

Young Coventry Entrepreneurs Earn VIP Trip to the Big Apple

Four young entrepreneurs from Grace Academy, Coventry won the opportunity of a lifetime after triumphing in the final of the Goal Programme's Big Deal Challenge at the University of Warwick. As their reward, the team of girls are to be jetted off to New York City, in autumn, later this year.

The annual 10 week enterprise event is for groups of Year 10 school children (aged 14 to 15) to create and develop a business idea and plan which is then, ultimately, pitched to a group of high profile business-related judges. This year's panel consisted of Nigel Sykes and Dr. Margi Levy (Warwick Business School), along with two University of Warwick alumni and a local businesswoman.

The winning group, Team Empire, from Grace Academy, Coventry had the idea of developing a social enterprise project for promoting healthy lifestyles and eating for young people – tackling childhood obesity. The girls' (Lucy Horner, Jemma Hancox, Leonie Bourne and Vicky Eustace) proposed plan was to enter primary schools, social groups (e.g. brownies) and hold information sessions on consuming healthily (perhaps afterschool), and dance and exercise classes. The girls are all very active and sporty so saw this, as well as the fact that they are teenagers themselves, as a key selling point.

Team Empire said: "As teenagers ourselves, we thought that we could make the message of healthy eating and lifestyles more viable to young people. It wouldn't be the teacher who was going on at them about it but us and we think we can get through to people more easily".

All of the 30 teams that initially signed up for the Challenge were supported by online mentors, in conjunction with the charity Brightside, who offered them leadership and business experience to try and help them win the competition. The mentors also attended the launch of the event and the final pitch to the panel of five judges.

The all girls quartet had to fend off some stiff competition to win the 'American Dream' trip including that of runners' up – 'Colours of the Clouds' – of Brighton Hill Community College, Basingstoke. The southern team's creation was an eco-friendly, totally biodegradable and rather attractive plant pot called Sow-Easy, available in different colours and sizes.

The girls added: "It was really amazing but very hard work. We got a lot of support but we had to do lots independently as well. Every day we would go into school and have to get on with all the different tasks. Though, now it was all worth it and we're really excited about the trip".

The 3-night VIP trip to the 'Big Apple' will consist of a mixture of entrepreneurial-related activities and sight-seeing. Team Empire hope to visit a large finance company and some US partner schools where they can showcase their healthy lifestyle schemes. Also, a visit to a production on Broadway would be hugely appreciated by the quartet.

The Goal Programme at the University of Warwick is designed to nurture and support gifted students in families, which have little experience in higher education, in progressing to leading universities, such as Warwick. This nationwide set-up offers help to young people at the most important times in their education – GCSEs and A-levels.

Notes to Editors

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