

# Young Entrepreneurs Hone Business Skills Through Mentor Match Program

by Gail Kimberling

of the Hells Canyon Journal

Young entrepreneurs were put to the test this past weekend as they presented their ideas to a panel of judges in a competition patterned after the popular "Shark Tank" television series.

The budding businesses owners were competing to win a \$500 grant for the culmination of the Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneurship program sponsored by Pine Valley 2050 and led by community coordinator Debi Lorence.

Vying for the prize were Gabe Brown with "Piano Occasions," Evie Davis with "Canyon Cosmetics," Gideon Davis with "Squeaky Clean" car detailing, Jason Ludin with "Jason's Lawn Care" and Elise Simpson with a pop-up boutique. (Lindsey Brown, who started a child care service, did not make a presentation.)

The panel of judges included Rachel Cairns, owner of Mamasté Airbnb; Cammie deCastro, Pine Eagle School District superintendent; local entrepreneur Tom Omann; Rick and Lauri Bryan, owners of Old Pine Market; and Stacy Green of Enterprise, founder of Mentor Match.

Each student had five minutes to describe their mission, marketing and financial efforts and answer questions from the judges. Green, in

"The most important thing you can have is a good work ethic, and you are all well on your way," Rick Bryan said.

## Mentor Match

Founded in 2010 by Stacy Green, Mentor Match has a proven track record of introducing rural teens to entrepreneurship and business skills and encouraging them to return to their home communities to work and put down roots.

The program came to Halfway thanks to support from Pine Valley 2050 and United Community Partners and a \$10,000 grant from The Ford Family Foundation.

Debi Lorence said she and the PV2050 Steering Committee learned from community and high school surveys that assisting and retaining youth through local businesses and entrepreneurship was a high priority for residents of all ages.

Mentor Match traditionally takes place during the school year, but Lorence felt a summer program would be more successful in Pine Valley.

Youth in the local program trained with Lorence twice a week in July and August to make business plans, create flyers and spreadsheets, calculate business costs, learn about profit, loss and franchises, work on marketing and meet with other business owners in Pine Valley and

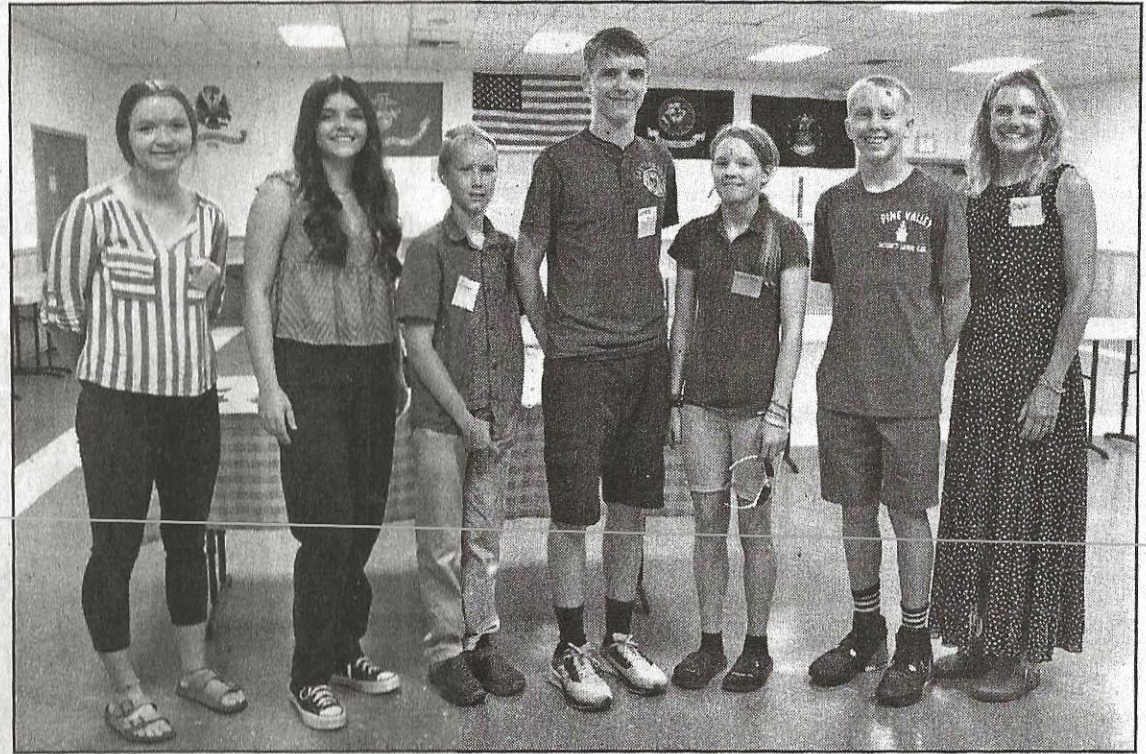


Photo by Gail Kimberling

**PINE VALLEY MENTOR MATCH PARTICIPANTS** Evie Davis, Elise Simpson, Gideon Davis, Gabriel Brown, Lindsey Brown and Jason Ludin are pictured with program coordinator Debi Lorence.

nesses were developed through the Halfway Mentor Match Teen Entrepreneurship Program:

**Gabe Brown – "Piano Occasions"**

"I play background classical piano music to accompany events such as weddings and birthday parties," said Gabe, a 16-year-old junior at Pine Eagle High School. "I have five years of piano experience and realized it's always been my passion. I hope to make a career out of it so my goal is to start this career process as

Gideon said he started a car detailing business because, "I hate getting in cars and sitting down on a dirty seat."

He said, "I will wash the outside of your car and vacuum and wipe down the inside, and clean the windows and clean the upholstery."

His cost depends on the size and condition of the vehicle, and Gideon is happy to provide free on-site evaluations.

"The price varies per car depending on how dirty it is," he explained.

Gideon has already in-

and other basic equipment.

"I got into it because when I came to Halfway I noticed some really messed-up looking yards," Jason said. "It really bugged me when I was out running cross country and track and I wanted to be able to help people clean up and take care of their lawn so it will be green and luscious grass."

Jason's Lawn Care's motto is, "We are mow-tivated," and the young entrepreneur already has a number of regular clients including Bonnie's Bookkeeping, Linda Miley

Green of Enterprise, founder of Mentor Match.

Each student had five minutes to describe their mission, marketing and financial efforts and answer questions from the judges. Green, in particular, asked each business owner to describe their greatest success and favorite failure.

Gabe, who provides live piano music for special occasions, said his biggest success was getting his first paying gig and his favorite failure was getting acclimated to his set and surroundings when he started playing for the gig. Gabe also said he could use the grant to purchase a portable keyboard and sound system.

Jason said he would use the grant money to purchase a lawnmower and ATV trailer for his lawn care business. His success was meeting his goal of getting clients and growing his business while his favorite failure was having his weed whacker break down and the time it took to re-string the equipment. Jason also hopes to branch out to provide snow removal this winter in his effort "to make our community a better place."

Elise Simpson combined her senior project with the Mentor Match program to create a pop-up boutique where she sells locally sourced items on consignment. Located in the Three-Color Building on Main Street, the boutique was open during Fourth of July week and will be open again over Labor Day weekend. Simpson said she needs the grant to help purchase a heat press to customize T-

make business plans, create flyers and spreadsheets, calculate business costs, learn about profit, loss and franchises, work on marketing and meet with other business owners in Pine Valley and beyond.

Lawrence was not paid for facilitating Mentor Match; instead, the grant funding covered program costs such as instructional videos, facilities, food, travel and awards, including the Shark Tank event. "Our hope and dream is we want the kids to be where there is work to be had, but also give them ways to explore and help the community and grow their skill set," Lawrence said when the program launched.

The reasons the local youth joined Mentor Match are as varied as their businesses.

Evyte said she joined "because my mom told me to," and her brother said he was bribed with home school credits.

Gabe said he joined "by default" since he was already part of the PV2050 steering committee.

"I wasn't part of the committee. I probably wouldn't have done this since I didn't have a business in mind," Gabe said. "But I think it was good experience because it put me outside of my comfort zone and the profit will help me. It will go towards college where I want to do music."

Lindsey said she wound up participating after tagging along with Gabe for the introductory Mentor Match session.

"I decided I needed to do this since I like buying fun-

birthday parties," said Gabe, a 16-year-old junior at Pine Eagle High School. "I have five years of piano experience and realized it's always been my passion. I hope to make a career out of it so my goal is to start this career process as soon as possible."

"I chose this particular business because I have a big catalog of music memorized which made it easy to get started. I have had one gig so far and I'm growing my business through flyers around town."

Gabe added he charges \$50.00 per hour for his services.

To contact Gabe please call 541-540-2006.

#### Lindsey Brown - Child Care Services

Lindsey is 13 and a Pine Eagle eighth grade student.

She decided to do a child care business because, "I enjoy entertaining smaller kids and I love to create stuff. I'm very crafty and I love to paint. I started babysitting when I was nine, taking care of my aunt's three kids, my cousins. For a few years it was an unofficial thing and then when I turned 12 she started leaving me alone with them."

"This year I did 'Teens and Tots' and was an aide and went down and helped the preschoolers [at Pine Eagle]. I charge \$10.00 an hour for up to three kids; any additional kids are \$5.00 an hour."

"I will provide references if needed," Lindsey said, adding she also plans to take a Safe Babysitting Class this fall in Baker City.

Lindsey can be reached at

His cost depends on the size and condition of the vehicle, and Gideon is happy to provide free on-site evaluations.

"The price varies per car depending on how dirty it is," he explained.

Gideon has already invested in several pieces of equipment including a shop vac and a portable carpet and upholstery cleaner, as well as brushes and buckets. He plans to use future proceeds for more supplies and savings.

To schedule an appointment for a free evaluation contact Gideon at 541-540-3798. Jason Ludin - Jason's Lawn Care

Jason, a 14-year-old sophomore at Pine Eagle, has been hard at work this summer with his new lawn care business. In fact, you might have seen Jason driving around Pine Valley on a four-wheeler with his weed eater, fuel cans

take care of their lawn so it will be green and luscious grass." Jason's Lawn Care's motto is, "We are now-tivated," and the young entrepreneur already has a number of regular clients including Bonnie's Bookkeeping, Linda Miley and Kim Stutzman.

"I'm definitely making a profit. I've been buying my own gas and oil," Jason said. Jason has a base rate of \$16.00 per hour for mowing, weed-whacking and general cleaning; for an additional fee he will collect and haul away grass clippings and yard debris.

"I charge \$10.00 per bag and this will allow me to make compost and support lawn care next year," Jason explained.

Jason also provides free estimates. He can be reached at 541-239-8907. Continued on page 11

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ena. Simpson said she would like to help purchase the grant to help purchase a heat press to customize T-shirts, hats and other items. Her greatest success has been attracting customers and her favorite failure was being open too early in the morning. Gideon, the youngest Mentor Match participant, said he would use the grant to recoup the purchase of two vacuums and other supplies for his mobile car detailing business. He told the judges his biggest success was learning to make flyers and his favorite failure was "not bringing a long enough extension cord" to his first job.

Evie plans to sell organic, homemade cosmetics such as chapstick, lotion and sugar scrubs through her business. Her favorite success was actually founding a business and her favorite mistake was not starting earlier in the program due to a conflict with a summer job. Evie would use the grant money to purchase supplies, including containers and labels, for her products.

Following consideration discussion, the judges unanimously selected Jason's Lawn Care as the recipient of the \$500 grant, saying they were especially impressed with his business vision and financial acumen.

All of the judges encouraged the youth to remain true to their ideas and provide a consistent service or product.

"I decided I needed to do this since I like buying [running] shoes," Lindsey said.

Jason said he was enticed by Lorence's presentation about the program at the end of the school year.

"I got hooked because it's interesting and it's starting your own business," Jason said. "It's also your business and no one else is controlling you. You just do the best for yourself and your own ability to produce money. It gives you insight on the real world."

From a parent's perspective, Jodie Davis said, "It gives them a boost of confidence and also the freedom to do something on their own."

Lindsey agreed, saying, "It gives you independence, and you don't have to depend on your parents as much for money."

Mentor Match will be on hiatus for the school year but the plan is to return next summer with sessions starting in early July.

Anyone interested in the program should contact Lorence at 541-604-1151 or visit the Pine Valley 2050 webpage at [pinevalley2050.org](http://pinevalley2050.org).

More information about the Mentor Match program is available on the Youth Program tab at [reinviventh-gruvral.com](http://reinviventh-gruvral.com).

### Mentor Match Businesses

The following local busi-

Baker City.

Lindsey can be reached at 541-540-2001.

### Evie Davis - Canyon Cosmetics

Evie, a 16-year-old home schooled student, has created Canyon Cosmetics featuring "homemade organic skin care products that are healthy and safe to use."

Evie explained she has been making chapstick for several years, mainly for Christmas presents and gifts. Most of her sales so far have been through word of mouth; however, Evie plans to start selling more products at Elise Simpson's pop-up boutique, Cornucopia Coffee House and Halfway Whimsical.

"My main costs are buying product containers and labels," Evie said.

Asked why she chose this particular business, Evie responded, "Because it's fun and they're the kind of products I want to use. If you can't pronounce the [ingredient] word you shouldn't be using it!"

For more information contact Evie at 541-540-3798.

### Gideon Davis - Squeeky Clean Car Cleaning

Gideon is a 12-year-old homeschooled eighth grader who started a car detailing business called Squeeky Clean.

His motto is, "Your car will be so clean a mouse couldn't find a crumb!"

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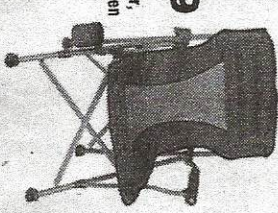
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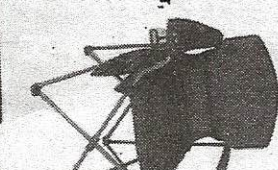
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