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Young Dream Enterprises: Motivating Youth through the Arts and Entrepreneurship

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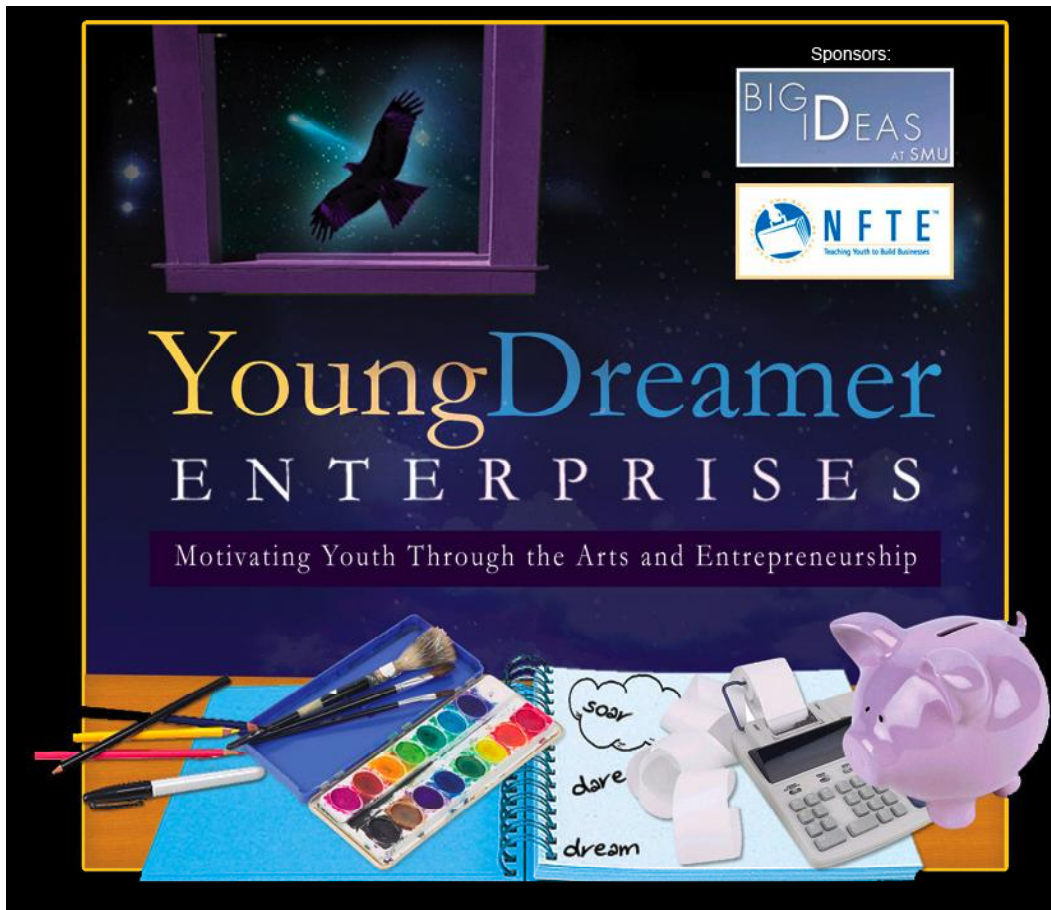
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Big iDeas at SMU Proposal

Title of Project: Young Dreamer Enterprises



Our Inspiration: "If you can dream it, you can do it. All our dreams can come true... if we have the courage to pursue them." – Walt Disney

List of Student Participants

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Year of Study: Senior

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Major(s): Journalism
Year of Study: Senior

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Dear Selection Committee,

We would like to thank you for your time and encouragement, and for allowing us to begin this project with the Big IDEas grant. In this proposal we have compiled a more focused set of ideas from the original proposal submitted last year. With the help of the Committee's suggestions, much research, and advice from various mentors, we have defined clearer goals on what types of students and resources we are targeting. We believe we are on our way to creating a program that will enrich the Dallas community. As you suggested, we are resubmitting the proposal for possible consideration of additional funds that can propel our project to the next level.

Thank you again for creating such a resource as Big Ideas, and for your guidance and support. We know that this experience will enrich our own lives in many ways, and we thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

The Young Dreamer Enterprise Team

Statement of Problem

If at-risk youth are asked to explain why they drop out of school or are uninterested in learning, they may say that school is not relevant to their lives; many times what they are most fascinated with are products, fashion, celebrities and media.

Young Dreamer Enterprises (YDE) addresses the issues of low-income youth financial development, educational performance and enterprise sustainability in Dallas, by showing young people how to create rather than merely consume. The goal of this project is to provide young low-income students with an artistic outlet where they can focus on creative initiatives and learn about aspects of entrepreneurship. In this way, the young people are able to learn about financial growth, as well as exercise their skills in a variety of hands-on activities.

According to the Salvation Army Dallas/Fort Worth website, “The U.S. Census Bureau's latest estimate indicates that Dallas County has a poverty population of 276,124, which is 14-percent of the county's total population. The Bureau speculates that this number could be as high as 330,377, meaning that as many as 16.7-percent of people in Dallas County could be living in poverty.”

Poverty in Dallas affects all types of people, including young people. Low-income youth may also be affected by other types of risk activities, such as teen pregnancy, substance abuse and destructive behaviors, and run the higher risk of dropping out of school early on. Without guidance, encouragement and resources, many lower-income youth may not have the opportunity to reach levels of educational enrichment that may prepare them for financial growth.

Proposed Methodology and Timeline

Young Dreamer Enterprises will be an ongoing project that will expand its projects and reach capabilities as the membership and volunteer base grows. The following is a proposed timeline for the first year of operations:

- **Career Event** - In Spring 2009 (Projected date in May) our team and volunteers are planning an event to take place at a selected local DISD school. The event will be similar to a Career Fair, but will show students at a very youthful and age-appropriate level about potential careers and about entrepreneurship. We are seeking professionals in the community to speak to the students as well.

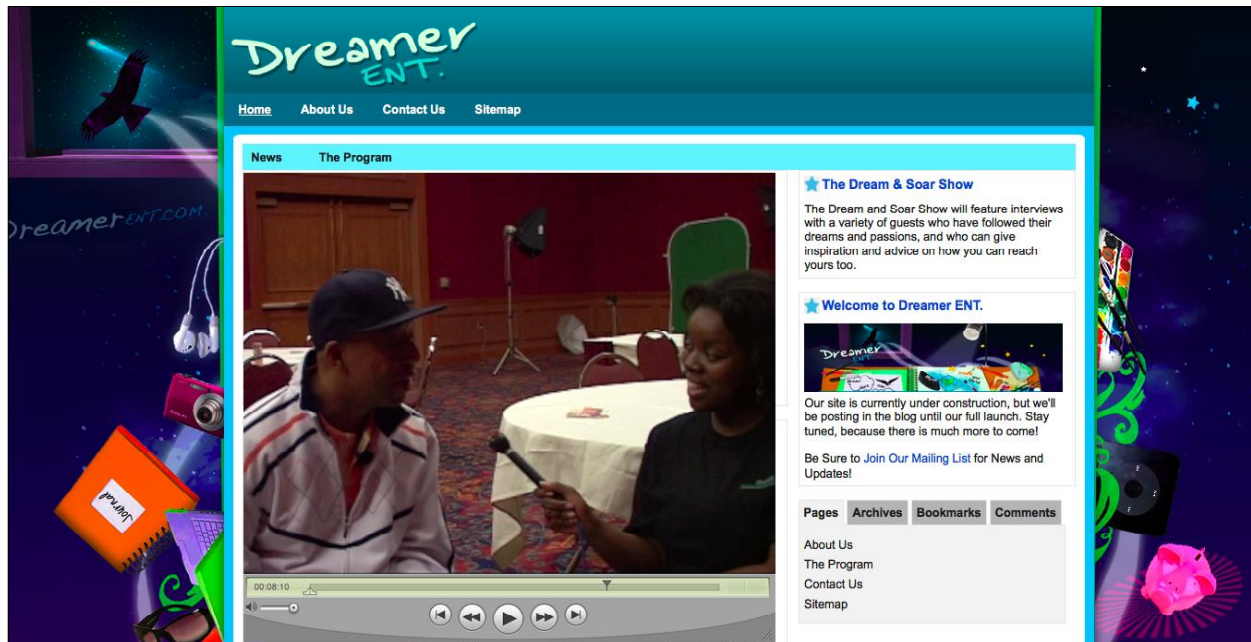
- **The Entrepreneurship Program** - (We are currently finalizing this portion of the program. Because we are working with younger students during the school year, there are still some factors we are determining with the school.) In Fall 2009 we will begin the entrepreneurship program, starting with about 10 students.
 - Our plan is to visit the school a select number of times each month to complete entrepreneurship lessons and activities, and bring in guest speakers. Our book sponsor, the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, has provided a curriculum we will use as a guideline, and we will include our own curriculum as well.
 - After doing some research we've decided to implement the project at a middle school as opposed to high school or elementary school. We found that the middle school/junior high years are often looked-over, and can be a critical time in student's lives when they are facing identity issues, and trying to figure out where they fit in. There have been studies that have shown that middle schools in America have high drop-out rates and the students are impressionable either to be motivated positively or negatively. The New York Times even has an entire beat section called "The Critical Years" based on the statistics within middle schools.
 - The students in the program will design their own creative products including apparel, accessories, mugs and greeting cards, and we will teach them the process of going from idea to finished product, and from business plan to final sale. We hope to organize a business expo at the school in the winter where the students can sell their products to their fellow students and teachers, as well as parents.

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- The final portion of the program will be a graduation where the students will receive awards for their participation and success. This will either take place at their school or preferably at SMU, where the students can get a look at the campus.
- **The Contest** - In Fall 2009 we will also launch an art and writing contest for students from elementary to high school. The general theme of the contest will be to encourage the students to think and reach for their goals now while they are young. We will ask students to consider their career aspirations, and to write about and illustrate their passion, how they hope to reach them, and about someone who has inspired them to pursue those dreams.
 - The goal of this contest is to allow students from all over the Dallas county to get involved with our project, and to allow them to think about their goals and steps they can take to get there, while stimulating their creative interests.
 - Our goal is to publish the winning entries that show the most creativity from the contest in a book that can be distributed to all of the schools involved and winners, as well as publish all of the entries on our website.
 - Every student who enters will receive a certificate of participation, and the top creative projects that exceed the judging criteria will be awarded cash and/or other prizes (including art supplies, plaques, etc.) The top winners, their parents and their teachers will be invited to the program graduation dinner at SMU where the students will be awarded their prizes, along with the program participants.
- **The Website and Multimedia Project** - Our ongoing media project will be a way to reach out to other students in the Dallas area who will not be able to take part in the actual program.
 - We will contact teachers all over the county and send publicity materials to invite them to use the curriculum and media project in their classrooms.
 - The website will be an ongoing interactive media project where student's work can be showcased and published throughout the program. The website will also contain our program curriculum, and include constantly updated inspiration,

encouragement of positive behaviors and project ideas that students can pursue on their own.

- The website will also contain multimedia lessons, as well as our original interviews with successful entrepreneurs and professionals of all ages. We have already completed interviews with such esteemed entrepreneurs as Russell Simmons, and are lining up more interviews to complete in the coming months.



Young Dreamer website and screenshot of interview with Russell Simmons

Rationale

When young people are given the chance to do something creative with the possibility of rewards, they are able to channel their energies into being constructive and learning something new. They are also uplifted and have more self-confidence in their abilities, and learn that there are other ways in which they can make money besides the traditional models they may be used to witnessing in the neighborhoods where they live.

Sustainability and Growth

In order to expand the project, we are developing partnerships with other organizations that support youth entrepreneurship and empowerment. The National Foundation for

Teaching Entrepreneurship has been supportive of our program, and we have received guidance from people at organizations such as Youth Venture and KidVentures. We are also working to establish an effective relationship with Big Thought. We are still seeking more sponsors to provide monetary donations, materials, printing services, and other resources for the students.

To establish growth, YDE is recruiting other students to volunteer as guest speakers, mentors and facilitators of the various aspects of the program. We've also spoken to people in the Leadership and Community Development office who have been supportive of this venture.

Anticipated Budget

EXPENSES		
Activity / Items	Dates	Costs
Career Fair Event	May 2009	
Printing of career booklets (Alphagraphics)		\$200
Balloons (Party City)		\$20
Cardboard Displays (Office Max) x5		\$40
Small mementos and grab bags (Small notebooks, stickers, snacks and novelties from Oriental Trading.com)		\$100
Art and Writing Contest	Ongoing	
Publications with student works, Projected 50 copies for schools and winners		\$400
Entrepreneurship Program	Ongoing	\$3500
Printing and Production Expenses for Student's Creative Products (Alpha Graphics, lulu.com, spreadshirt.com), art supplies, decorations for Business Expo		
Graduation ceremony dinner		
AV and Event Technology		\$40
Food, decorations, plaques, awards		\$600
Mailing Expenses to send books, materials to schools	Ongoing	\$150
Transportation to school for volunteers	Ongoing	\$50
Total Anticipated Budget		\$5100

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Person responsible for funds:

Julene Fleurmond

Signature of person responsible for funds:

Julene Fleurmond

Case Studies

Other programs that are similar in nature to I-Cubed Creative Enterprises are also effective in stimulating the energy and minds of low-income youth. I-Cubed was inspired by their models of teaching entrepreneurship and engaging students in creativity and real-world situations.

Case Study: Kid Ventures, <http://www.kidventures.org>



KidVentures, Inc. is a non-profit organization located in South Florida, which brings an innovative approach to educating children, especially those at risk. Students tally up their sales and put their math skills to good use.

The mission is to “introduce young people to entrepreneurship by developing and running their own business. By marketing products they create, students learn basic life-skills and enhance their self-worth.”

KidVentures helps students create and run a business, developing and marketing artistic products. They are exposed to a wide range of business and life skills, including the concepts of working, making a profit, and giving back to the community in which they live. These lessons, learned at an early age, can fundamentally change a child’s horizon and self-esteem.

Children are involved in a real-life business endeavor, learning product costing; advertising and marketing; business etiquette; and accurate record keeping. This can motivate them to improve in primary achievement areas, such as reading, writing and math.

Artwork done by the students themselves is the hallmark of this entrepreneurship program. Most importantly, students gain self-confidence, while working on projects that allow their creativity to unfold. Program profits go back to the community, and support a cause of the students' choice.

Case Study: Sweat Equity Enterprises (SEE), <http://www.sweatequityenterprises.org>



SEE is a project-based youth development learning program in New York, that takes place in a real professional environment where teenagers participate consistently and long term, year round for all four years of high school. Participants gain intensive design, technology and entrepreneurship training as they develop original graphic, product, or apparel designs from concept to prototype in partnership with a company partner. Past projects include cars for Nissan, bags for Marc Ecko Enterprises, graphic design for New York Cares and Abada Capoeira, shoes for Skechers, watches for Callanen/Timex, package design for Dr. Miracles Hair Care Products, skateboards for Zoo York, and outerwear for Marc Ecko Enterprises.

Case Study: Big Thought, <http://www.bigthought.org>



Big Thought is a national learning partnership inspiring, empowering, and uniting children and communities through education, arts and culture. The big thought is that a community, working together, can lift children up and better their lives using arts and culture as tools and catalysts.

Big Thought supports community partnerships, cultural integration for academic achievement, youth development and family learning.

Big Thought partners with more than 70 community agencies including school districts, library systems, child care centers, recreation centers and juvenile detention facilities to deliver programs that inspire and empower children, from preschoolers to teens, and help them become successful and productive adults. The organization also supports those adults who guide them, like teachers, parents, caregivers, librarians and mentors.

Research studies have shown that the arts, when deliberately integrated into the curriculum, have a profound ability to help children learn. They help raise test scores, improve literacy skills, boost cognitive development and keep students engaged.

Case Study: Artists for Humanity, <http://www.afhboston.com>



Artists for Humanity is a non-profit youth development organization that trains and employs urban teens to design, market and sell fine and commercial art products. AFH's mission is to bridge economic, racial and social divisions by providing underserved youth with the keys to self-sufficiency through paid employment in the arts.

AFH tackles the myriad of problems youth face today with tremendous impact. They celebrate the talents and wonderful energy of young people by giving them hands-on experiences in creativity, business, teamwork, and self-governance. Participants learn the techniques and tools of professional artists and the business world while engaging in education, employment, artistic exploration, and entrepreneurial experience. This produces life-transforming change for youth and for their communities. With support and donations, they are able to meet the needs of talented and hard working young people from Boston's urban neighborhoods.

Case Study: Yellow Rose Society, www.miami.edu/studorgs/yellowrosesociety



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The Yellow Rose Society is a community service organization for women at the University of Miami. The organization's annual Art for Public Health Contest provides the opportunity for elementary and middle school children from the surrounding area to submit any form of art that depicts important health and wellness issues. The children are also required to research and write a short essay about the health issue.

The winning entries receive awards of excellence are published in a book distributed to the students and their schools. This project has enabled the students to become passionate about using art and writing as means of communication as well as learn about health issues that may affect them.