

The Progress

Mount St. Dominic seniors show off business acumen at annual 'LionWorks' competition

By CLAUDIA CEVA Editor

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CALDWELL – Indigo Inc. emerged victorious during the Mount St.



Dominic Academy L.E.O. (Leadership, Entrepreneurship and

Opportunity) Program's "LionWorks" competition on Monday, Jan. 8.

The L.E.O. Program encompasses an interactive business curriculum and panel discussions throughout the year with current business and government leaders.

The competition event, which is in its fourth year, which pays homage to the "Shark Tank" television program, pit seven teams of four seniors each against each other.

One by one, the groups pitched their ideas for a variety of startup companies and products to a panel of six judges, which included Mount alumna of the Class of 2014 Fiona Ambrosio, Kate Heath, Lindsay Hartelius, Michael Stewart, Bob Smith and Nydia Cabrera.

Ambrosio is an associate business and commercial litigation attorney for Wilentz, Goldman and Spitzer; Heath serves as the director of student entrepreneurship at George Washington University; Hartelius is the assistant director of undergraduate outreach and reputation at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken; Stewart is the co-founder of Peri & Stewart LLC commercial law firm; Smith is the director of I-Corps in the George Washington University Office of Innovation and Entrepreneurship; and Cabrera is a celebrity makeup artist.

The judges asked several questions of each of the groups following the presentations before deliberating after the final pitch was made.

At the end of the competition, the team of Bridget Castano, Gabriella Chapel, Elise McGirt and Caitlyn Tagliareni's product, Campus Carryall, a laundry bag designed with sections to sort laundry and store everything a college student needs to be able to clean their clothes and transport it in one sitting.

Castano, a Caldwell resident, said working on the project for the past nearly two years was both a "challenging" and "rewarding" experience.

"Winning the Shark Tank was awesome," she said. "We put so many hours in every day to prepare, so the idea that our project won was a really gratifying experience."

Their prize was a \$5,000 check to be evenly split from the Leonidas Foundation, which provides relief to the poor and distressed while fostering mentorship and public service.

The second place winners were Olivia Bibbo, Rebecca Hess, Lauren Hoffman and Georgiana LaRocca of the group Solely for their shoe cover concept with a sturdy rubber sole meant to be slipped on during inclement weather. They earned a prize of \$2,500.

The team of Kaitlyn Ferris, Liana Gumpel, Jalissa Cortes and Cassidy Sontz of **Glow.Edu** created a clear gel candle holder meant for graduating high school seniors and customized with their college or university.

Alyssa Russo, Mia Rivera-Diaz, Sofia Raso and Giuliana DeSilva, of SMAG, came up with the concept of the Clean Screen, which prevents bad weather from impairing a car's back-up-camera.

Lauren Bowling, Catherine Chandler, Sophia Duration and Olivia Szumita fashioned the Dry Stride, an easy-to-transport bag with a fan to dry cleats.

The Spritz Brush, a brush with an internal cylinder for hair products like spray conditioner which can be used on-to-go following activities like sports, was created by Erin Murphy, Caitlin Caufield, Madeline Dolan and Emily Mokris.

Lastly, the team of Elizabeth Forsatz, Sadani Michel, Brooke Proscia and Kimlani Tanella presented Tee-zy, a golf ball holder with spring technology providing quick access to golf balls with the press of a button.

Fostering Leaders

L.E.O. Program Director and Theology Department Chair Christine Victori said the annual "LionWorks" competition is the culmination of the girls' hard work, and the Mount was lucky to have such a variety of guest speakers visit the school and give some insight into real-world opportunities in the workforce.

"We are grateful to the many women in business who have shared their gifts and talents with students this past year," she said.

Each "LionWorks" team was mentored by a Mount alumna throughout the process.

The concept behind the competition is to give the students within the L.E.O. Program an opportunity to showcase the entrepreneurial concepts and skills they have learned throughout the previous three semesters.

“It’s up to us as educators of young women to empower students with the tools and self-confidence they’ll need to be the changemakers of tomorrow and to challenge gender inequity in the workplace,” Victori said.



