

'T-Biz' wins Kevin Liles' Business Plan Competition

By Ursula V. Battle

You may want to remember the names Ian Harpool, Ayannah Jefferson, Rodney Jones and Dorian Russell. These high school teens were the winners of the Kevin Liles' Summer Business Academies Business Plan Project Competition.

The teens won the competition based on their Business Plan for 'T-Biz' (Teen Biz), a website that specializes in providing teens with updates on the latest sports, music, fashion, local jobs, hot spots and events.

"All of the other teams were great, but the first place winners really had their business plan together," said Liles. "Their presentation was so good, that I would personally invest in them."

The Business Plan Project, which was the capstone of the Summer Business Academies, gave participants the chance to compete for a chance to be production assistants at the Jay-Z and Kanye West "Watch the Throne" concert in November, an opportunity to meet Jay-Z and Kanye West, and a \$500 cash prize. The participants presented their Business Plans on August 4, 2011 in Morgan's University Student Center.

Liles may get the opportunity to invest in their venture. According to Ian Harpool who attends Randallstown High School, the team plans to move forward with taking "T-Biz" from a business plan concept to a reality.

"We are going to pursue it," Harpool said. "We are scheduled to meet to talk about where we are going from here. We plan to set-up meetings with corporations and investors."

Harpool was among 30 Baltimore teens who attended the Summer Business Academies. The camp was sponsored by Liles' Make It Happen Foundation, which seeks to foster an environment for young people to realize their full potential.

Harpool says he wants to pursue a career as a philosopher, attorney, music producer, or in the area of Public Relations. He feels the Academy has better prepared him to attain his goals.

"I was wondering what I would do over the summer," recalled Harpool.



(Above left) (Left to right) Dr. David Wilson, president of Morgan State University, Dorian Russell, age 15; Ayannah Jefferson, age 16; Kevin Liles, founder and CEO of KWL Enterprises; Rodney Jones, age 16; and Ian Harpool, age 15; These four students were the first place winners of the Kevin Liles' Summer Business Academies Business Plan Project Competition for their business plan for "T-BIZ," a website specializing in providing teens with updates on the latest sports, music, fashion, local jobs, hot spots and events. (Above right) Panel of Judges (Left to right) Kevin Liles, Scott Mills, president and COO of BET Networks; Ric Ramsey, president and CEO of the LEAD Program. Thirty Baltimore teens attended the Summer Business Academies, sponsored by Kevin Liles' Make It Happen Foundation, which seeks to foster an environment where young people are able to realize their full potential.

Photos by Paul Greene

"A friend of my dad's told my father about this opportunity, and my father told me. I applied the next day. When I got in, I was very excited. I learned how to work as a team, which was a key aspect in the program. I also learned about accounting techniques, software skills, and how to create a business plan."

He added, "Our group was one hundred percent committed. I had never seen anyone in the program a day before in my life. Now, our group members are very close. In terms of our business plan, we wanted to create something that was not out there. We sat down with the MBA students and thought along the lines of media and marketing to teens because that's who we are."

Each team member was assigned a position within T-Biz. According to Harpool, he served as president; Rodney James, age 16, of Lansdowne High School was vice president, Dorian Russell, age 15, of St. Paul's High School was CFO, while 16-year-old Ayanna Jefferson of Baltimore City High School

was CEO. "We were all equal," he said. "There was no hierarchy."

Liles, a native of Baltimore, worked his way up from an unpaid intern at Def Jam Records, to president and CEO. Harpool said Liles inspires him.

"Each day, I now live on making it happen. Everyday I repeat this to myself. Kevin Liles' success does tell me hard work does pay off."

Harpool's teammate Dorian Russell wants to be an entertainment lawyer or an actor. He also touted the academy.

I learned how to write a business plan and all aspects of business," said Russell Dorian. "It's easy to come up with an idea, but there are also financials, marketing, and advertising. I also learned about leadership aspects to better myself as a role-model and leader."

He added, "I believe our team was successful because we were balanced, tried to come up with the best business plan we could, and we stayed in our place and in our roles. We had some disagreements, but we always sat down and

got through our hard decisions."

Russell also talked about T-Biz's future plans, and the importance of The Make It Happen Foundation.

"We are hiring two people from two other groups within the camp that we thought would be good additions to this team," Russell said. "We are going to start in Baltimore, and if successful, we are going to expand to different cities. T-Biz will be a one-stop shop area where teens can come for updates on music, fashion and other information, as opposed to visiting different websites or pushing different tabs."

He added, "The Make It Happen Foundation gave us the opportunity to do something over the summer, and show teens they are more than what they think. Some think I can't vote, drive, etcetera. This camp makes you feel you can take charge, and gives you a good outlook on your future. Make It Happen is a good way to go."