



News Release

For Immediate Release

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DC-Area Teen Entrepreneur Crowned “Top Dog” during NFTE’s Regional Business Plan Competition

TC Williams High School Student Wins \$1,500 of Capital to Grow Dog Walking Business

Washington, DC (May 24, 2010) — As the old saying goes: “Every dog has its day,” and if it’s any indication, there will be many winning days ahead for Aisha Cooper, a senior from TC Williams High School in Alexandria, VA, who won top honors during the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship’s (NFTE DC Region) 31st semi-annual Regional Business Plan Competition, when she wowed judges with her business plan for her dog walking start-up, PuppyLOVE. NFTE, an organization which inspires young people to succeed in school and in life by seizing educational opportunities and starting their own businesses, held its twice-yearly business plan competition last week.

The 17-year-old edged out her four other teenage entrepreneurial peers from Virginia and Maryland to win first place – a \$1,500 cash prize of seed capital investment to jump-start her business, which employs local teens to offer dog-walking services to help working and busy dog owners in area apartment complexes and targeted residential neighborhoods. The 12th grader was among five DC-area students presenting and defending business plans before a panel of 12 local business and community leaders during the regional finals, hosted by respected global law firm, Sutherland Asbill & Brennan.

NFTE, a nonprofit organization that teaches entrepreneurship and business skills to high school students from low-income communities, holds this competition at the end of each school semester as the culmination of its 80-hour “Mini-MBA” entrepreneurship curriculum. Throughout the year, NFTE provides school-based and after-school programs to teach youth from low-income communities how to start and operate their own businesses. At the end of each semester, all students are required to write a business plan, and they participate in an “In-class Business Plan Competition.” Those winning students go on to compete first in the Semifinals, then a Regional Final competition, where the top five finalists compete to win \$150 to \$1,500 in seed capital investment.

The other teen entrepreneurs, who emerged from an original pool of 800 NFTE students and won money to start and grow their businesses, were:

Second Place Winner — \$750

Darnell Lisby (age 15), founder, His-Story Tutoring (history/geography tutoring), Suitland High School (Forestville, MD)

Third Place — \$500

JD Bautista (age 17) founder, Thermo Threads (thermo-chromatic t-shirts), TC Williams High School (Alexandria, VA)

Runners-Up — \$150

Autumn Fletcher (age 15), founder, Braids Galore (braid/corn-row hair stylist), Potomac High School (Oxen Hill, MD)

Helen Gonzales (age 17), founder, It’s Personal (hand-crafted jewelry) Wakefield High School (Arlington, VA)

Third-place winner, JD Bautista, another TC Williams' student, also received an additional distinction when he was awarded \$250 for the Entrepreneurial Spirit Award presented to the NFTE student of the evening who best embodies the essence of a young entrepreneur – passion, enthusiasm and commitment.

Along with her first-place victory, Aisha won two round-trip Southwest Airlines tickets for future business travel and an all-expense-paid trip to New York City this fall to compete in NFTE's National Competition for up to \$10,000, as emotionally depicted in the award-winning documentary, "[Ten9Eight – Shoot for the Moon.](#)"

The NFTE teen entrepreneurs presented their business plans to this panel of successful entrepreneurs, senior business executives and civic leaders from the region:

- Sid Chowdhary, President & CEO, Credence Management Solutions LLC
- Tammy Darvish, Vice President, DarCars
- Cheryl Dickison, New Business Development, r2Integrated
- Rob Franklin, Co-founder, President Public Services, Chief Information Officer, MorganFranklin Corporation
- Ann B. Friedman, Teacher, Montgomery County Public Schools; Chair, SEED Foundation; Trustee, Conservation International
- Don Goodwin, Executive Vice President, Sales and Marketing, Latisys
- Lillian Harris, President, Man-Machine Systems Assessment
- Mark Hunker, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Catapult Technology
- Cynthia Krus, Partner, Sutherland
- Margaret Meiers, Vice President Programs, Freddie Mac Foundation
- Tod K. Reichert, Chief Compliance Officer, Senior Vice President & Corporate Secretary, MCG Capital Corporation
- Felice Wagner, Chief Business Development Officer, Sutherland

Julie Silard Kantor, executive director of NFTE DC Region and the national vice president for Government Affairs, explains that regional competition was a fantastic success and remarked that NFTE continues to receive high marks and gain momentum for its unique curriculum.

"Here in the Greater Washington area, NFTE is now supporting teachers at 17 different schools in DC, MD and VA, reaching close to 800 students annually. And recently, so many other exciting changes have taken place. Our middle school curriculum has just been released by Pearson Education, our grades 9-12 curriculum in math has been named a finalist for the Association for Educational Publishers' Distinguished Achievement Award, and research conducted by Harvard and Brandeis universities have shown significant impact in engaging youth more in school and increasing their desire to go to college.

In addition, NFTE is receiving high praise for his novel approach to entrepreneurial education. Recently, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan remarked: "Not everyone is going to want to work for big business, we need to have a systemic approach for teaching youth small business and entrepreneurship and NFTE has the best program in the country." Also, earlier this year, respected *New York Times* columnist and best-selling author Thomas L. Friedman singled out NFTE for its good work and encouraged President Obama to use the NFTE program in high schools to inspire America's youth, in his January 23 Op-Ed, "More (Steve) Jobs, Jobs, Jobs, Jobs."

"Sutherland was happy to sponsor the NFTE Regional Business Competition for the second consecutive year," says Sutherland partner, Cynthia Krus. "The business competition ignites the entrepreneurial spirit in everyone — the students, the teachers and the supporters. We are excited to be a part of spreading that spirit and seeing the American dream come alive in these students."

About NFTE

The Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (www.nfte.com) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, whose mission is to teach entrepreneurship education programs to young people from low-income communities. Since 1987, NFTE has reached over 280,000 youth. Currently NFTE is taught by more than 1,500 active certified entrepreneurship teachers at programs in 21 states and 12 countries outside the U.S. Since 1994, NFTE-GW (<http://dc.nfte.com>) has served more than 22,000 students.