



News Release

For Immediate Release

Contact: Karen Seidman; karen@seidmansays.biz
(202) 364-8134; fax (202) 364-0131

Montgomery County Teen Entrepreneur Takes Home Second Place in Annual Smith Barney/NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge

Washington, DC, October 31, 2006 — A Montgomery Blair High School student is \$5,000 richer today after taking home second place prize during the 1st Annual Smith Barney/NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, held October 26, 2006 in New York City. **Thomas Dant**, 17, owner of **Fine Foto**, a service business providing fine photography, was among 28 other high school students from across the country vying for financial awards during this first-of-its-kind national youth business plan competition.

Dant's company, Fine Foto, is "dedicated to providing customers with professional fine art photography" while striving to provide "customers with the best service and care possible that portrays our love and passion for the art." During the competition, Dant exhibited his exceptional photographs. The judges in particular were moved by his compelling "Passion for the Planet" series which featured on-duty Montgomery County firefighters.

Dant explains that since a young age he has known where his passion lies — in photography and business. "Fine Foto is committed to bringing passion to the planet," he says. "For far too long business has lacked the passion and placement in people's hearts that our American forefathers once obtained. This need has inspired me to combine my two loves to bring back an American tradition and to touch the hearts of everyone who comes in contact with my product." Dant isn't unfamiliar with doing well in competitions. He has won fine arts competitions including first place prize in the category of Digital Photography at the 2006 National Fine Arts Festival in Orlando, Florida.

NFTE-Greater Washington area teens were well represented in the competition. Dant was among four local entrepreneurs that went onto compete in this recent national challenge after earning top placements during two semi-annual NFTE's 2006 Regional Youth Business Plan Competitions held last January and May. NFTE (the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship) is a nonprofit organization that teaches business, academic and life skills to young people from low-income communities.

In addition to Dant, the other local NFTE competitors were:

- **Chante Goodwin**, 18, is the owner of Your Way Computer Services. Ms. Goodwin completed the NFTE program at Suitland High School in Forestville, Maryland. Her business offers technical consulting and support, building customized computer systems and offering training for customers and small businesses. Ms. Goodwin is currently attending Clark Atlanta University.
- **SeKeithia Johnson**, 18, also of Suitland High School, is the owner of Unleashed Talent. Miss Johnson has created a poetry CD, "Reflections of an Adolescent," that "inspires, enlightens and educates" her generation. SeKeithia has been writing poetry since second grade and has won many awards for her work. The proceeds of her CD will be used toward the production of various performances that discuss the myriad of difficult issues facing urban youth today. She currently is attending Bowie State University.

- **Aaron Sacks**, 16, a junior at Montgomery Blair High School, is owner of You're On Deck (www.yodcards.com), a start-up business providing customized and quality playing cards featuring the names and/or logos of businesses on the back of each card. Mr. Sacks has already garnered some success with his customized playing cards, selling 1,000 decks in his first few months in business and appearing on Fox Morning News. Among other charitable works, he offers his goods at reduced rates to help fill a niche and to maximize organizations' exposure.

Dant, Goodwin and Sacks all advanced to semifinals during the day-long competition. During the evening ceremonies, where the top contenders presented their business plans to a panel of prestigious judges, Dant was announced as taking second place, winning his \$5,000 prize. The \$10,000 first-place honor was awarded to Amy Lewis, a student from Wichita, Kansas, who developed "The Scribbler," a nail polish pen applicator, a device now awaiting patent. In addition to Washington, DC and Kansas, participating students represented schools in districts in California, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Maryland (Baltimore), Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas.

"We couldn't be more proud of Thomas and all of our local competitors," says Executive Director for NFTE-Greater Washington Julie Kantor. "They were incredible; we couldn't be more thrilled and impressed with how well our students performed. Not only did four of our students earn the right to travel to New York to participate in this competition — which was extremely impressive in itself. But three of four of our DC teens advanced to the semifinals, which was the highest penetration of success from any of the other NFTE regions."

Dant excited by his achievement is enjoying his success and making plans for the future for both his business and his art. Plans are already underway for him to display his winning photographs during an exhibition at The Ralls Collection, a privately-owned gallery located in Georgetown that showcases contemporary paintings, photography, prints and sculpture. Gallery owner Marsha Ralls, who serves as a NFTE-GW board member, will chair NFTE's 2007 Dare 2 Dream Gala to be held May 2, 2007.

NFTE's entrepreneurship education program teaches students in low-income communities the business skills to start their own small business, while reinforcing academic and life skills. NFTE's goal is to give young people the skills and confidence to unlock their true potential, so they can improve their lives and their communities.

According to research conducted by the Harvard Graduate School of Education on students participating in NFTE programs, entrepreneurship education is helping students stay on the academic track and aspires to attend college.

More information about NFTE is available at www.nfte.com, or feel free to contact NFTE Executive Director Julie Kantor at (202) 467-6383, or Karen Seidman, of Seidman Says Communications, (202) 364-8134; karen@seidmansays.biz.

###

About NFTE

The National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (www.nfte.com) is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, whose mission is to teach entrepreneurship to young people from low-income communities to enhance their economic productivity by improving their business, academic and life skills. Since 1987, NFTE has reached over 150,000 youth and trained more than 4,200 certified entrepreneurship teachers. Currently NFTE has active programs in 28 states and 13 countries. Since 1994, NFTE-GW (<http://dc.nfte.com>) has served more than 12,000 students.