

Eastern Echo

B-side honors participants

By [Matt Dauzy](#) | THE EASTERN ECHO

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Visitors to the Student Center were welcomed by an unfamiliar sound Thursday in a familiar place. Live heavy metal music was pumped through the complex, emanating from a conference room on the third floor.

The performance, by a band called In the Name of the King, was the opening entertainment for a youth entrepreneurship showcase presented by The Business Side of Youth. The B. Side is a program put on by Eastern Michigan University's Office of Academic Service-Learning.

The program focuses on developing marketable skills and providing entrepreneurial and leadership skills with the hope of fostering youth owned and operated businesses.

Angelina Broderick, the program's assistant director, said the program provides an opportunity to learn and explore the world of business in a safe environment.

Benefits of participation in the program expand beyond just knowledge and skill building. Participants who show a willingness to further their business aspirations can earn \$250 in generator grants and proposals approved by a board of directors may earn "microloans" ranging up to \$2,500 to help get their businesses off the ground.

The event, which is held every spring, centers around recognition of those who complete the "B. Side Basics" training workshop, which introduces participants to the world of business and helps them discover what skills they have as well as how to market those skills to the public. The workshop centers on the development of a functioning, professional business model that the youth can use to advance toward their goals of entrepreneurship.

Following the opening set by the metal band refreshments were served and program director Jack Bidlack welcomed those attending. Two former graduates of the program, Malik Redding and Willie Washington, provided the keynote addresses.

Redding, a senior at Huron High School and founding member of B.Side's young moguls club, praised the program for helping him turn a passion for cooking into a functioning food vendor and catering business he calls 4 Wheels and Bread. He is a two-time winner of the Generation E business plan showcase and competition in Battle Creek.

Washington, who graduated from Ypsilanti High School this year, thanked the program for giving his young life a positive direction. He also credited the program for giving him the encouragement to launch Willie's Sweet Treats, a gourmet candy and cheesecake company.

He is a recipient of the Gates Millennium Scholarship, which will pay for his studies through a doctorate degree at Kettering University in Flint.

"The 70 or 80 pages of the scholarship application were overwhelming... but then I remembered what I learned here and realized that I just have to approach it like we approach our business; make a timetable, and stick with it," Washington said.

Bidlack explained how the program was born from the voice of the community. Surveys performed by the Ypsilanti Youth to Empowered to Act and other agencies recognized many youth's concerns about their future.

"The YVEA spent two years mapping the concerns of the community and found a need for job opportunities," he said.

The solution was to create jobs.

"Why not find something you can do, and go do it," Bidlack said. "We try to help these youth do just that with responsible business practices."

The program, though geared toward attracting arewitsself to such rigid conwfines. Samuel Freeman, a recent master's graduate at EMU, heard about the program through a friend and approached them. After completing a number of B. Side's training programs, he was the recipient of a \$250 generator fund for his Capital Trades Marketing Group.

The organization will also be offering a summer program called the "The B. Side of A", with "A" reflecting an emphasis on the arts. Bidlack pointed out the overwhelming majority of presentation on hand at the showcase had to do with fields like visual media, graphic design and entertainment. He hopes to use the summer program to highlight the relationship between the fine arts and business worlds.

All funding for the B. Side's approximately \$175,000 is made up of about 80 percent of private foundation grants and about 20 percent county funds. The organization has also recently launched a private donation drive.