



Young business-minded get trained with B.Side

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It was a crowded house at Ypsilanti's Angel Cafe on Friday evening 10/19 during the kickoff for the B.Side - The Business Side of Youth - a new entrepreneurship program for Ypsilanti-area young people.

"Please remember my name," Milan High School senior Alexis Anderson, a member of the B.Side youth advisory committee, told the group. "You will see it on the news, you will see it in Forbes. I will be a CEO someday."

The B.Side program will consist of three main components: B.Side Basics, an 18-week entrepreneurial training program; Young Moguls Club, business plans and micro-lending; and B.Side enterprises, which provides experiential learning through internships, shadowing, and B.Side-owned and run businesses.

The model for the program comes from successful ventures in other cities, like Los Angeles' "Food from the 'Hood," a student-managed salad dressing company, and Homeboy Industries, a youth-run umbrella organization with silk-screening and maintenance companies, a cafe and a bakery training program.

"What we find with young people coming from the less well-resourced areas is that they're hungry," said Daniel Rabuzzi, national program director for the [National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship](#). "I mean, frankly, it's not as if they've been welcomed with open arms in many areas, and it's like 'do it yourself, man.' This concept of entrepreneurship really rings true."

The B.Side is being run through [Eastern Michigan University](#)'s Office of Academic Service-Learning, and was recently awarded more than \$100,000 in grant money from various foundations and organizations. Those include the [Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation](#), [Washtenaw County](#), the [James A. and Faith Knight Foundation](#) and the RNR Foundation, according to AAACF Vice President Martha Bloom.

"We're really looking for this project to be a motivator to try to improve kids' educational outcomes," Bloom said. "We're looking at it to provide some economic stimulus in the community among the young people, and we're also looking to create a partnership with

young people and adults in the community that can support them and teach them the skills they need to be successful."

The first official B.Side Enterprise, announced at the meeting, will be a partnership with Washtenaw County's Digital Inclusion Task Force, an initiative to bring refurbished computers to low-income users, with B.Side students running the tech support business. The entire program begins in January and will be operated using Eastern's facilities until a dedicated space in Ypsilanti can be obtained.

"Every kid in Ann Arbor and Ypsi and in the world wants to make money," said steering committee member Lisa Dengiz, one of the co-founders of the Neutral Zone teen center in Ann Arbor. "What they see and hear, the buzz is entrepreneurial, I want to be my own boss. Of course, they'll learn it's really difficult to become your own boss, but that's what we're going to teach them.

"It's going to be amazing. It really is. And these programs work, especially with underserved communities, because those are the kids who really want to make money, and if you give them the tools, they're so eager and they have so many fantastic ideas."

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