Celebrating West Cumbria’s young entrepreneurs

Wednesday 7 August, 2024

The achievements of nine young West Cumbrians who set up their own businesses have been celebrated at an event in Whitehaven.

The entrepreneurs, aged between 15 and 25, all took part in the Positive Enterprise programme, an initiative from Cumbria Community Foundation and the Centre for Leadership Performance (CforLP) to help young people go into business.

The nine were each given a £1,000 grant at the start of this year, and have received mentoring from an experienced businessperson, and skills and leadership development opportunities from CforLP.

At a celebration event at Whitehaven Civic Hall, the young people each gave a presentation about their business, explaining where their idea had come from, and talking through the successes and challenges they had faced.

Chloe Pennington, 16, from Whitehaven, was awarded an extra £1,000 on the night by judges who were impressed by the presentation she gave about her business, Chloe’s Chateau. Chloe creates and sells original art and gifts, transforming her own brightly coloured, hand-drawn artwork showing scenes from West Cumbria and beyond into prints, mugs and other giftware.

She said: “Being on the programme with so many brilliant young participants, that have now become friends, is a privilege that I am so very grateful for and one that any young person would benefit hugely from.

“It's endorsed my belief that if you want something badly enough, with a lot of hard work and a little bit of help from your friends, it's absolutely achievable.”

The judges chose Jackson Slack, 17, of Silloth, as highly commended runner-up. His business – Football Fluidity – offers 1-2-1 football coaching at affordable prices.

Jackson said: “Football is my passion so with this business, I’m getting paid to do a job I love. I thought of the idea last year but the Positive Enterprise grant was the catalyst for the business. I wouldn’t have been able to afford everything I needed without it. Equipment, insurance, first aid kit, goals – everything adds up.”

David Beeby, Chair of Cumbria Community Foundation, presented certificates to all the participants and praised them for their efforts.

He told them: “You have all shown that entrepreneurial spirit is alive and kicking here in West Cumbria. We know that mentoring makes a positive difference. Soak up that advice – it’s your business so make your own decisions, but also listen to the advice you’re given.”

The guest speakers were Glenn Anderson, of Proud and Diverse Cumbria, and James Batchelor, of Alertacall.

The businesses created range from animal accessories and sweets to self-care packages for people undergoing chemotherapy.

Ava Marshall, 15, of Whitehaven, set up Lightside Equestrian & Pet Products. She produces and sells horse fly rugs made from recycled materials, including plastic bottles; plus other pet accessories such as dog bandanas, treat bags, and boot covers.

Sustainability was a key driver for several of the young entrepreneurs.

Scott Sharpe, 21, of Whitehaven, sells vintage clothing and upcycled items through his business White Horse Vintage. He was inspired to create his brand by his love for retro clothing, and a desire to reduce fast fashion.

And Aaron Groggins, 22, also from Whitehaven, launched Lakeland Life – market-style festival events promoting food, drink and sustainability.

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Haidee Trohear, 17, of Seascale, creates decorated glass bottles and drinking glasses through her business which she named Glaxto.

Jasmine Riddick, 17 of Workington, set up Jasmine Grace: Made with Love to create self-care packages for people with anxiety and those going through chemotherapy.

Meyrem Korkmaz, 17, of Maryport, established her business Sweet Stems to sell handmade bouquets of sweets at affordable prices.

Alfie Goodwin, 15, of Whitehaven, also sells sweets through his business Sugar Tongue. His mentor was Mark Cant, one of the brains behind the Cumbrian Tea brand. Mark said: “I was a Positive Enterprise mentor last year too and I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it. It’s about giving something back and helping the next generation, and I learn a lot from the young people involved too.”

This was the Positive Enterprise programme’s second year. The three-year programme is funded by the Cumbria-based property developer Brian Scowcroft with match funding from Sellafield Ltd as part of its Transforming West Cumbria programme, Nuclear Waste Services, Well Whitehaven, Morgan Sindall and Kaefer.

The programme is delivered by the Centre for Leadership Performance. Early Careers Project Lead Rhianna Smith said: "We're blown away by the creativity and self-motivation of all the young entrepreneurs. With the invaluable support from their mentors and our practical workshops and programme of support, they've developed key employability and entrepreneurial skills such as negotiation, time management, and business knowledge.”

Annalee Holliday, Head of Grants Practice & Programmes at Cumbria Community Foundation, said: “Thank you to all of the donors who have funded this truly transformational programme, which will no doubt have a lasting effect on the young people involved throughout their careers.

“We look forward to recruiting the next group of young entrepreneurs in the autumn.”

For more information visit www.cumbriafoundation.org/transforming-west-cumbria/positive-enterprise/

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