



Contact: Melinda Zemper
Phone: (513) 706-3737
Email: mzemper@fuse.net

Sept. 30, 2013

Mary Helen Clothing, GoSunStove and A Caring Choice Win Cincinnati SCORE Client of the Year Awards

Cincinnati SCORE volunteers help entrepreneurs start, run businesses

A child's clothing designer, solar stove manufacturer and home care company for senior citizens took the top three greater Cincinnati SCORE Clients of the Year awards at its annual luncheon Sept. 21.

SCORE, the volunteer arm of the Small Business Administration, is made up of retired and working executives who volunteer to help new and existing entrepreneurs start up and run their businesses. Counseling is free and low and no-cost seminars are available.

May Helen Boeddeker , 24, of College Hill, knew from the age of eight that she wanted to design clothing. When she worked as a University of Cincinnati Design Architecture, Art and Planning (DAAP) intern for national companies that market clothing to teens and children, she realized that the children's lines were too "grown up

and mature.” Her line is designed for girls to age 12 and allows children to be children. She’ll expand to offer women and boys clothing in 2014.

A 2012 UC graduate, she was invited this fall to the Emerging Artists Showcase at the New York Fashion Show and sold her entire collection off models at the show. All her clothing is hand-sewn, and she employs three women to work with her at her home-based business.

“I began working with SCORE about eight months ago,” she said. “Dennis Murphy, George Adams and Lowell Bowie helped the most, but a total of eight SCORE counselors helped me put a strict business plan in action and helped with finance and networking. Dennis is a great person to run ideas by and get new inspiration from. When you bounce ideas off a number of people, you get a lot of ideas as well.”

For more information about Mary Helen Clothing, go to www.maryhelenclothing.com or call (513) 608-7966.

Patrick Sherwin, owner of Applied Sunshine, LLC, of Spring Grove Village invents, manufactures, sells and distributes solar energy products and technology. Sherwin, a certified solar professional, has been a solar consultant for 13 years and has managed solar energy projects in several countries. He plans to travel to Haiti and Latin America this fall to promote his GoSunStove, a solar cooker that can cook three pounds of food in about 30 minutes.

“The GoSunStove team aims to reduce the use of dirty fuels such as wood and charcoal for cooking,” he said. “This will help decrease respiratory illnesses, restore forests, and save critical resources for impoverished families around the world.”

Specially shaped aluminum reflectors focus light onto a glass vacuum tube commonly used for solar water heating. “The vacuum is a fantastic insulator, safely trapping and converting the majority of the sunlight into useable heat; the GoSunStove the world’s most efficient solar cooker,” Sherwin said. He estimated the stove is about 80 percent efficient versus the less than 20 percent efficiency of most solar technology.

He began working with SCORE about a ago, and SCORE counselor Marty Densmore of Mason helped him develop a two-pronged business plan which allows him to sell his products in the U.S. for a profit and overseas as a more philanthropic endeavor.

A Kickstarter campaign he engaged recently has netted more than \$117,000 over the last three weeks. Most of the money will go to tooling and fabrication of products.

“I’ve always been looking for solar to provide solutions to power our lives,” said Sherwin. “I’ve been in small business for more than ten years, but I’m still an amateur. Marty has been a huge help. He’s providing me with a good basis for what I need to know to do business.”

For more information on GoSunStove, go to www.gosunstove.com or call (513) 201-7620.

Jim Kummer, president of A Caring Choice in Monfort Heights, has been in business and worked with SCORE counselor Rick Johnston of West Chester for 10 years. A Caring Choice helps senior citizens with non-medical care in their homes so they can live independently as long as possible. Kummer has been named a Small Business of the Year finalist at the Greater Cincinnati USA Chamber of Commerce for the last four years. The company has 70 employees.

“Everyone has areas of strengths and some areas you are not so strong in,” he said. “As a business owner, sometimes you get tunnel vision. People at SCORE take you out of the business and give you new ideas. When you get new ideas, you get new energy.”

Kummer said sometimes business consultants tell you what you want to hear, but SCORE tells you what you need to hear. “That way you don’t spend a lot of money on things that don’t work,” he said.

For more information about A Caring Choice, go to www.acaringchoice.com or call (513) 574-4148.

Cincinnati SCORE estimates it helped create 350 new jobs last year, with a local average support cost per job of \$129.

For more information about SCORE, its counseling services and seminars, go to www.scoreworks.org or call (513) 684-2812.

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