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West Michigan Entrepreneur Wins Ann Arbor Battle of the Elevator Pitch

Regional Centers

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West Michigan entrepreneur Keith Brophy became the first local business leader to capture the championship trophy at the New Enterprise Forum annual “Entrepreneurial Improv: Battle of the Elevator Pitch.”

The third annual event was held on May 21 in Ann Arbor. The light hearted contest pits seasoned business leaders against each other in the impromptu pitching of a nonsensical business concept to a large assembled audience. A panel of respected judges from the business community evaluates the pitches and selects a champion from among the business leaders. The winner takes home a traveling trophy, as well as the expectation to defend the title in the following year.

The event is intended to highlight the entrepreneurial approaches presented to potential investors. Judges score the contestants both on core relevancy of the points made, as well as on the entertainment value. This year’s contestants were two-time defending champion Dick Beedon, a well know Ann Arbor based serial entrepreneur; Mike Klein, President of OnLine Technologies, the state’s largest hosting firm; Josh Linkner, Founder and CEO of Eprize, a 600 employee prize company in Ann Arbor; and Keith Brophy, General Manager at RCM in Grand Rapids, past Co-Founder of Sagestone, and President of NuSoft Solutions.

Keith remarked, “I was pleased to receive the invite to compete in this fun and prestigious event. It is for a great cause in educating our state’s aspiring entrepreneurs. It is also a very stellar crowd involved with the event that I have great respect for. My involvement as a West Michigan business person also keeps the focus on statewide awareness of our investment ecosystem.”

Contestants were provided with a business concept to review and 30 minutes to prepare a pitch. They presented their high intensity 3 minute pitch to the judges and the participating crowd. Past year’s themes included concepts such as Gilligan’s Island and Dr. Suess. This year’s concept focused on pitching the funding of Christopher Columbus’ voyage to a recalcitrant Queen Isabella. A facilitator, in character as Queen Isabella, received the pitches. Keith’s presentation centered on the profit aspects of the journey, presented in character as “The Profit Musketeer.”

“I was very pleased and fortunate to win, as the contestants were formidable leaders in the state and all did excellent pitches in their own right. Somehow I caught the Queen’s favor, and I believe it was the way I spelled out the path to profit!” stated Keith Brophy.

(more)

The Small Business and Technology Development Center (MI-SBTDC) was a key catalyst in Keith Brophy's business launch of Sagestone, as well as a strong supporter of the NEF event, with the shared interest of promoting the state's entrepreneurial climate. Carol Lopucki, State Director of the MI-SBTDC remarked, "We are very happy to see the continued success of the NEF Battle of the Elevator Pitch, and were excited to see Keith claim the trophy since he is one of our SBTDC alumni from his startup days. His presentation was very lively and profit centered, just as we expected!"

About NEF

The New Enterprise Forum (NEF) is a not-for-profit corporation founded in 1986 to help entrepreneurs prosper and grow. NEF links entrepreneurs to management expertise, potential joint venture partners, mentors, business services, capital, and other critical resources.

Since its founding, NEF has been a model for similar groups and a magnet for entrepreneurs and investors throughout Michigan and the Midwest. The success has captured national media attention and is unique among organizations of its kind in longevity, dynamism, and the number of deals assisted. To find out more about NEF visit www.newenterpriseforum.org.

About MI-SBTDC

The Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center provides counseling, training and market research for Michigan's new business ventures, existing small businesses, expanding new businesses and new technology companies. The MI-SBTDC is located at the Grand Valley State University Seidman College of Business in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As host of the MI-SBTDC State Headquarters, the Seidman College of Business oversees the twelve-region MI-SBTDC network. Entrepreneurs and small business owners may access the services of their nearest MI-SBTDC by calling (616) 331.7480 or visiting www.misbtdc.org.

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