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# Quarterly Update: Summer 2013

## DEPARTMENTAL NEWSLETTER ° UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA OFFICE FOR BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### DIRECTOR'S CUT

## Social Entrepreneurs

By D. Craig Taylor, Executive Director

Entrepreneurs are essential drivers of innovation and progress. In the business world, they act as engines of growth, harnessing opportunity and innovation to fuel economic advancement. Social entrepreneurs act similarly, tapping inspiration, creativity, courage and fortitude, to seize opportunities that challenge and forever change established, but fundamentally inequitable systems. Distinct from a business entrepreneur who sees value in the creation of new markets, the social entrepreneur aims for value in the form of transformational change that will benefit underserved communities and, ultimately, society at large. Social entrepreneurs pioneer innovative and systemic approaches for meeting the needs of the marginalized, the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised populations that lack the financial means or political clout to achieve lasting benefits on their own.

The Office for Business & Community Economic Development (BCED) is a social enterprise whose goal is to

leverage the assets and resources of the University to provide innovative solutions to real-world socioeconomic problems. Our office works to build stronger, more vibrant communities through programs and initiatives designed to support underserved or marginalized populations in the following areas: business and nonprofit development, entrepreneurship, community economic development, computer technology, leadership, education, and research. BCED often uses a blended value business model that combines a revenue-generating business with a social-value-generating structure. Many commercial businesses would consider themselves to have social objectives, but as a social enterprise, BCED is distinctive because its social or economic purpose is central to what it does. Rather than maximizing shareholder value, BCED's main goal is to generate profit to further its economic development objectives. Our social enterprise approach to solving problems in Minnesota's urban areas can be summarized as sustainable economic activity that also makes a social impact.



Nam Nguyen and Wilson Maceno in the Computer Refurbishing Lab

### FEATURED PARTNER

## National Cristina Foundation

The Computer Technology Services Program takes donated computers that are no longer being used, refurbishes them and gives them to people living in the community who aren't able to afford a new computer. BCED aims to reduce the growing inequality of access to information technologies among low income and disadvantaged groups.

The goal of the Computer Technology Services Program is to provide a professional training environment for community members to continue developing and enhancing their technology skills beyond the basics in order to compete in the global workforce.

Recently, the Computer Technology Services Program

started using the online Remote Donation System provided by the National Cristina Foundation (NCF). National Cristina Foundation's online nonprofit locator enables donors of used computers and other electronic hardware to select a local charity or school in their area of the country to receive their equipment. To see this system in operation, go to <http://diversity.umn.edu/bced/node/36>.

The Office for BCED is proud to be affiliated with NCF, and share the same mission of promoting technology reuse and providing equipment for people and organizations in need within the community.

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**The University of Minnesota's Office For Business and Community Economic Development (BCED)** supports the economic growth and development of Minnesota communities through partnerships with government, private enterprise, and community organizations.

## PROGRAM UPDATE

## Computer Classes Available to Improve Skills in Technology

The University of Minnesota's Office for Business & Community Economic Development offers numerous computer training classes designed for beginners and people who need a refresher course. The goal of our computer training program is to provide people with essential computer skills that are needed today in the workforce, in school and in everyday life. By providing free computer classes for community residents, we are helping them build skills so they are able to obtain a job or continue on with their education. Our computer lab has fourteen computers



Participants in the free computer classes at B-Tech Center

that are all updated with the latest software and technology. Our classes are offered every other week with both morning and evening classes available. All classes are at UROC (Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center), located in North Minneapolis. The full address is 2001 Plymouth Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN, 55411.

For a list of upcoming classes, please visit <http://diversity.umn.edu/bced/node/28>.

To register, call 612-624-3404 or email Mai Vang at [vang1612@umn.edu](mailto:vang1612@umn.edu).

## PROGRAM UPDATE

## Business Accelerator Program

The Business Accelerator Program, formerly known as the Growth Accelerator Program, graduated eleven teams on June 20, 2013. This six-month dynamic business advisory resource paired businesses poised for dramatic growth with successful business owners in the community to advise these businesses on how to build capacity and improve efficiency and profitability. Each pair was assisted by a graduate student who executed key tasks to carry out individualized growth initiatives established by the business advisors. The eleven teams met a minimum of once per month, attended a monthly workshop and had a peer group discussion covering social media, customer service, leadership development, and growth management. The closing

ceremony was inspiring as each participant shared with the group how their business changed during the six-month cohort.

“I would like to say first of all, THANK YOU. Thank you to you, the University of Minnesota, and all the Business Accelerator Program funders, supporters, and resources involved in providing this wonderful opportunity for small, entrepreneurial businesses! It has been a privilege and a blessing to work with the Business Accelerator Program, U of M, and an experienced business executive team! We sincerely appreciated the business counsel, support, and class training we received during our six month participation. The one-on-one meetings with our business mentor

and grad student team were very helpful in discussing the various needs of our business planning, stages, models, and go forward strategies. The classroom training and seminars provided valuable information to support the business operations including organizational and leadership development, marketing, media, technology and finance. Our participation in the Business Accelerator Program brought helpful and insightful business planning in preparation for our next steps to commercialization! Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in the Business Accelerator Program and making this valuable resource available for small, entrepreneurial businesses as ours! Many thanks!”  
D. Yungner

## PROGRAM UPDATE

## Community Health Initiative 2013 Summer Internship Program

The Community Health Initiative (CHI) Summer Internship Program had another strong showing in the nonprofit health community. This year, we placed thirteen graduate students from the schools of Public Health and Social Work in community-based nonprofits across the Twin Cities. Organizations hosting the CHI interns included WellShare International, Mental Health Resources, Northside Achievement Zone, American Indian Cancer Foundation, Neighborhood Health Source, Brian Coyle Community Center, African Challenges Corporation, The Family Partnership and Minnesota Visiting Nurse Agency.

CHI Community Internships are available each summer, typically occurring from early June to the end of August. They are paid, full-time positions available only to full-time University of Minnesota graduate students enrolled in the Medical School, School of Public Health, or School of Social Work. Qualifying nonprofit organizations and businesses include those located in the greater metropolitan area, which serve economically disadvantaged areas and communities of color, and are in the health care or medical industry.

The Community Health Initiative is a unique effort that focuses directly on communities that face public health

disparities and other socioeconomic issues. This initiative is a direct result of a partnership between Medica and the University of Minnesota's Office for Business & Community Economic Development, which is committed to advancing the quality of life for Minnesota communities.

For more information about the CHI Community Internships or Student Consulting Projects, please contact Nedy Windham at [windh003@umn.edu](mailto:windh003@umn.edu) or call 612-625-2053.

## SUCCESS STORY

## jEM Students Deliver Unique Biz Pitches

In June and July 2013, twenty-five high school students and graduates from Minneapolis/St. Paul and surrounding areas joined and completed the fifth annual Junior Entrepreneurs of Minnesota (jEM) Summer Camp. The jEM Summer Camp is designed to introduce high school students to the basics of entrepreneurship and leadership through active learning sessions and a community service project at Oak Park Center in North Minneapolis.

A highlight for the jEM students was a presentation of group business pitches to an audience including families, mentors, and the program sponsors/partners on the final day. This year, four teams developed individualized business plans, which included an organic food buffet, an online clothing line, a wellness program for pets, and a summer camp for the "Golden Age" community. Each youth contributed to and showcased his/her newly gained leadership skills and entrepreneurial ideas.

Throughout the five-week camp, students were exposed to entrepreneurs from the community as guest speakers in-kind and by site visits. One youth expressed her

positive influence from the guest speakers: "What I thought was cool was all the guest speakers. Entrepreneurs are still doing what they believe in and working hard at it. They keep their 'positions' and are still entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is being good at what you are doing and having a passion for it... It makes me think more about my possibilities. I am someone who likes to volunteer. I may go to third world countries to volunteer for the water problems." After completing jEM, she now wants to share her entrepreneurial knowledge to create sustainable business strategies abroad. Congratulations to the jEM students on their achievement and growth!



*The jEM students and staff with certificates at final dinner*

## EVENT SERIES

## Women's Business Development Center (WBDC)

BCED hosted the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) Procurement Meeting on June 4, 2013. The event was a huge success for our Targeted Business Program as over 100 participants registered to learn more about the U of M purchasing process. Mike Volna, Associate Vice President of the Controller's Office, gave a warm welcome to the audience, and Elaine Nissen, Coordinator from the Office of Business Relations, made an insightful introduction as a link to University resources and services.



*Your growth is our business.*

The panel discussion, which featured multiple Category Managers from Purchasing Services, gave solid advice on where to start when looking for potential buyers at the U of M. One such place is the MBID website, [purchasing.umn.edu/mbid/login.html](http://purchasing.umn.edu/mbid/login.html). BCED Project Managers are also a

great resource in seeking new vendor opportunities. In the words of Purchasing Director Tim Bray, "If you have questions or concerns about supplier diversity, ask Nick. He's there to help you find answers."

The Procurement Meeting also encouraged attendance at the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC) National Conference & Business Fair from June 25-27, 2013. This marked the first time Minneapolis hosted the conference and received a strong turnout from local companies and businesses from all across the country. BCED Executive Director, Craig Taylor, along with Project Managers Sharon Banks and Nick Schicker, attended multiple events to build our network and visibility.

Contact Nick Schicker for any questions at [nschicke@umn.edu](mailto:nschicke@umn.edu) or call 612-625-8460.



## QUARTERLY SPOTLIGHT

**Alejandra De Freitas** has been BCED's Community Health Initiative (CHI) intern since February 2012. Alejandra was born in Peru, and relocated to the United States in 2008. She completed her undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Florida. She is now a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs with a Master of Development Practice (MDP) in international development.

During her time with BCED, she has cultivated her skills through screening and interviewing potential program student consultants, matching community health organizations with students possessing the most appropriate education and experience for the individual projects and internships, and supervising other student consultants throughout the program. In August, Alejandra will be leaving for Washington, D.C. to start her post-graduate career with the Organization of American States (OAS) as a Consultant of Human Development, Education, and Employment. With OAS, she will focus on evaluation, capacity strengthening, public health, international education, cultural awareness, and immigrant/refugee communities.

Alejandra's knowledge, expertise, support and commitment to the CHI Program, the participants and the BCED office has been invaluable. She will not be easily replaced and will be greatly missed, yet we are excited for Alejandra's new job with OAS. We wish Alejandra the best in D.C. and all of her future endeavors!

PARTNER PROFILE

**YAW CONSTRUCTION GROUP, INC.**

Yaw Construction Group, Inc. was started in 2006 with an aim to grow into a trusted, reputable company within the Twin Cities. The company has expanded its services over the years offering services as general contractor, construction management and specializing in the areas of concrete, masonry and some selective demolition.

The company is run with three major objectives to ensure long-term success - a focus on being competitively priced, building lasting relations and performance with safety, quality and productivity at the forefront. Yaw Construction is focused on building strategic relations and partnerships and is involved with different partners on various projects.

The president and owner of Yaw Construction Group is Gilbert Odonkor, who is a graduate from the University of Minnesota Construction Management Program, and also has a Masters in Finance from the University of St. Thomas. Gilbert serves on the academic board of the UMN Construction Management Program and is also the current president of the local chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC-UM).

Prior to forming Yaw Construction, Gilbert held various positions on a variety of projects in the Twin Cities. Gilbert has worked through the ranks of the industry, starting as

block tender during his college days, to project engineer, superintendent, estimator and project manager.

The industry has faced many challenges during the recession. Yaw Construction is always being proactive in its preview of market trends, as well as understanding the competition and strategizing accordingly. This has enabled Yaw Construction to grow into the well-established company that it is today, working on many high profile projects, leading Yaw Construction to be awarded "NAMC Medium Contractor of the Year" two years in a row.

Yaw Construction attributes its current success in surviving the economic downturn to the strong work ethic, attention to detail and inherent values that drive the company and are exhibited by its employees. The company is also very grateful for the help received along the way from numerous firms in the community like MEDA, CCI Surety, NAMC-UM and its relationships in the general contracting community.

The challenge for a firm like Yaw Construction is often having to compete with some of the general contractors that self-perform the work as well. Allowing small contractors like Yaw Construction to make a profit on jobs is essential to the survival and growth of not only the minority business group but the whole subcontracting part of the industry.

Gilbert's passion for excellence in performance and customer satisfaction is paired with a passion for giving back to the community. Gilbert is actively involved with community activities. For the past two years, while serving as Vice President of the Upper Midwest Chapter of the National Association of Minority Contractors (NAMC-UM), he has been the chairperson for the Home Makeover



**UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES**

Now accepting Fall Student Consulting Project applications for the **Community Health Initiative (CHI)** and **MTAP for Nonprofits**. Interested local public health and community-based nonprofit organizations should apply at [www.bced.umn.edu](http://www.bced.umn.edu).

For more information, contact Nedy Windham at [windh003@umn.edu](mailto:windh003@umn.edu) or call 612-625-2053.

**Awards, Incentive & Recognition (AIR) Luncheon**

The AIR Luncheon will be held on Tuesday, October 22, 2013, from 12:00 pm through 1:30 pm at the Mississippi Room in Coffman Memorial Union. Registration deadline is Monday, October 7, 2013. Apply online at [www.bced.umn.edu](http://www.bced.umn.edu). For more information, contact Nick Schicker at [nschicke@umn.edu](mailto:nschicke@umn.edu) or call 612-625-8460.

Committee that selects a homeowner from predominantly lower-income neighborhoods whose home needs work but the owner is unable to fund home repairs.

Underprivileged school children in Ghana benefit from a program started by Gilbert to solicit computers and educational materials. To learn more about Yaw Construction and their completed projects, visit [www.yawconstruction.com](http://www.yawconstruction.com).

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The University's mission, carried out on multiple campuses and throughout the state, is threefold: research and discovery, teaching and learning, and outreach and public service.

The mission of the University of Minnesota's Office for Business & Community Economic Development is to contribute to the economic growth and development of Minnesota communities.

**Office for Business & Community Economic Development (BCED)**  
2221 University Ave SE, Suite 136  
Minneapolis, MN 55414  
Phone: 612-624-0530  
[www.bced.umn.edu](http://www.bced.umn.edu)

**BCED B-Tech Center**  
Urban Research & Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC)  
2001 Plymouth Ave N, Suite 106  
Minneapolis, MN 55411  
Phone: 612-624-3404  
[www.uroc.umn.edu](http://www.uroc.umn.edu)