

Leesburg Today

SBDC Issues First Business Plan Award

By Kara Clark

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The Loudoun Small Business Development Center paid homage to the county's many up-and-coming small business and entrepreneurs Thursday night during its Business Plan Competition Awards ceremony.

The ceremony is planned to become an annual event. It was held at K2M in Leesburg, an appropriate location, many pointed out, as its CEO, Eric Major, built his medical device company, which has a focus on surgical solutions for spinal pathology, from the ground up.

Major was one of 12 judges for the competition, which picked from among 13 contestants for the best local business model plans. He called the competition "a beginning," not only for the competition itself but for those involved.

"This recognizes a beginning for you as an entrepreneur and for Loudoun County to step up as the place for entrepreneurs," Major said.

Those vying for the top business plan represented a myriad of interests. The recession-proof alcohol industry was well represented, with Loudoun's first microdistillery since Prohibition, Catoctin Creek Distilling Company, LLC, in Purcellville; Il Pioppo, a wine importer and distributor; M.A. Hagerman Brewing Company, a craft beer producing brewery run by former Old Dominion Brewery employees; and Wine N' Out, a future restaurant pairing differing wine menus with fun finger foods; rounding out that list.

Also up for consideration for the award were Coupounfield, LLC, an online site where companies can post coupons free of charge; Custom Interior Consulting, LLC, an interior decorating consulting company; The Living Legacy Project, which chronicles a loved one's last days; Meneghetti SPA/Abbina Design Appliances, an Italian importer of high-end standalone kitchen appliances; The Nomeiri Law Firm, which provides legal services to individuals, small businesses, and families; Pearson Consulting, LLC, a science-based consultancy that advises companies on medicines set to go on the market; TREEHOUSE for creative kids, LLC, which provides instruction to children in fine arts, theatre and yoga; United Family Healthcare, which provides home-based medical, non-medical and personal services; and Shamrock Music, LLC.

After the field was narrowed to eight finalists, who each gave five-minute presentations about their businesses to those in attendance, Il Pioppo took home fourth place, Catoctin Creek Distilling Services received third place honors and United Family Healthcare finished as runner up.

The winner, Pearson Consulting, LLC, received \$1,000, in addition to a prize basket that includes free consulting services. Founder Dr. Renee Pearson tearfully accepted the honor. In her short acceptance speech, Pearson expressed her support for the county her business calls home.

"I spend money and I spend it in Loudoun County. Let's go Loudoun," she said.