Entrepreneurial Development in the Slate Belt: Building up from the Youth

For Mr. Victor Rodite, the Slate Belt Council of Government, and the Slate Belt Chamber of Commerce
Lafayette College Technology Clinic
Final Report, Fall 2015
Our Team

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Mr. Victor Rodite is our primary contact and client for the Technology Clinic 2015-2016 project. He is a certified community planner and a part of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). He is also the Executive Director Emeritus of the Slate Belt Council of Governments (COG). Mr. Rodite has been both a client and collaborator with past Technology Clinic projects.
The Slate Belt Council of Governments and the Slate Belt Chamber of Commerce identify the opportunity for additional economic and community development within the Slate Belt. Specifically, they aim to attract small businesses and entrepreneurs in order to spur economic growth locally.

One approach identified by Mr. Rodite, is to inspire entrepreneurial spirit by engaging with the youth within the Slate Belt.
Viable Projects

The Technology Clinic (Tech Clinic) has established several viable options that would attempt to inspire and encourage the youth to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities in the Slate Belt. The Tech Clinic explored the following ideas:

- The establishment of a Junior Achievement program (an organization that is devoted to educating students about entrepreneurship and different types of career paths), which would be implemented in one of the local high schools.
● The organization of a video competition where high school students would create their own videos displaying a career path of interest and they would present the videos in a competition format.
● An online database that connects high school students with small businesses and entrepreneurs in the Slate Belt region.
● The development of a Future Business Leaders of America program (an extra-curricular that guides students in applying entrepreneurial skills in real life scenarios).
In addition to the ideas discussed, the Tech Clinic decided to pursue the following:

- The development of a website that would provide information about becoming an entrepreneur
- A series of videos interviews that highlight successful business owners and entrepreneurs in the Slate Belt that target the youth and would be displayed on the website.
Website

Tech Clinic built a website that will function as an online resource for high school students that have an interest in pursuing entrepreneurship in the Slate Belt region.

Among the different resources, the website will house the video interviews of successful entrepreneurs as part of our media campaign.

URL link to the website: https://sites.google.com/site/entrepreneurshipslatebelt/
Why a website?

A website has some advantages over creating a physical directory or document. For instance:

- It can be easily updated when information changes and new opportunities arise
- It is accessible to everyone, including high school students
- It can hold several resources from different locations regarding entrepreneurship
- It would act as a “one-stop-shop” for all the collected information regarding entrepreneurship
How will the website function?

The website will assist high school students in:

- Learning about important skills needed to start a private business as problem-solving, motivation, marketing etc.
- Connecting with resources that help in establishing a private business
- Learning more about possible organizations that are designed to develop life skills in careers, entrepreneurship and business management
- Getting to know successful examples of private businesses in the Slate Belt area
Managing the website

At the end of this project the website management will be transferred to ___________, which/who will be responsible for keeping the announcement page up to date as well as adding more video interviews recorded by high school students.
Video Interviews

One way to catch students’ attention is through a visually stimulating experience. We have created four video interviews. Each interview demonstrates individuals with interesting and unique career paths, and the videos present individuals as relatable while showing that anyone can start his or her own business based on a variety of interests. In addition, these videos encourage entrepreneurial activities in the region. Overall, the videos are short, powerful, and inspiring.
Featured Individuals

Young Opportunists:

Kelly McCollian
(McCollian Farm)

Emily Evanko
(Construction Project Manager)
Featured Individuals

Slate Belt Entrepreneurs:

David Due
(Country Springs Farm)

Frank Russo
(Tellus Underground Technology)

Source: linkedin.com
The McCollians have 120 acres of land between Bangor and Martins Creek, Pennsylvania and is run by Patrick McCollian and his family. Over the years their method for growing crops has changed and new innovative techniques are being used. The McCollians have created a greenhouse where they use a hydroponic method of growing lettuce. Hydroponics is the process of growing crops without the use of water. This allows for the nutrients to reach the plants directly without having to search for nutrients within the soil. This process is more effective and productive.

Source: teignbridgehorticulture.co.uk
Meet Kelly McCollian

Kelly is the daughter of Patrick McCollian. She studies criminal law and justice at Desales University. Apart from her academic obligations Kelly is also in charge of running the egg business at the farm.

Under Kelly’s management, the number of eggs the farm produces and sells has increased by 11 doz a week to 70 doz a week. Her passion for farming has driven her to take on her own role in the family business.
Kelly is a perfect example of a young woman who is relatable to the youth but is also unique in her own way; apart from conducting the casual daily activities, she is also responsible for managing a business. We believe that Kelly could inspire any young students to pursue a career in farming.

Kelly and the McCollians portray that farming provides many business opportunities. For instance, the McCollians produce eggs, honey, vegetables, crops and beef cows.
Why students can pursue agriculture?

As our population continues to increase, it is essential that we have enough farmers, especially since there will be a higher demand for fresh and local food. In the Slate Belt of Pennsylvania there is a large quantity of land that is ideal for farming crops which could lead to potential business opportunities for students interested in farming. Not only is the demand for farming increasing but technology is also expanding and new methods for farming are being used that increase innovation, quality and productivity.

Sources: beefmagazine.com/ and landwatch.com
Meet Emily Evanko

Emily Evanko is a Senior at Lafayette College. Last summer she was given the opportunity to work on a construction site as a steam roller operator. During the summer, she also took charge of the fuel purchasing and coordinating repairs for the equipment. Because of her devotion and hard work she was promoted to Project Manager. Emily was chosen as a case study to attempt to inspire the youth of the Slate Belt to consider career opportunities that may be otherwise considered unconventional.
Meet David Due

Mr. David Due is a charismatic entrepreneur from Roseto, PA. He is the owner of David F. Due Construction and currently, with his wife, Rhonda Due, he runs a fish farm called Country Spring Farms. Together, they raise and sell a variety of fish such as trout and catfish, to local restaurants in the Slate Belt.
David Due Continued

Mr. Due has always been inspired to incorporate his interest in the outdoors and fishing into a business. Therefore, when he was able to acquire land in Roseto, he wasted little time setting up the farm with his wife. Two years ago, with collaboration with the Tech Clinic, Mr. Due pioneered a floating solar-powered device for his fish ponds. These panels garner energy from the Sun, while also providing shade for the fish.
Mr. Due is in the process of two new and inventive projects located in the Slate Belt:

The first has to do with the construction of an air chilling mechanism for his ponds at Country Springs Farm. Mr. Due found that it was difficult to keep the water temperature in all of the pools at a constant 52 degrees Fahrenheit, even with the solar panels. As a result, he came up with an idea to build an air chiller.

In the Spring, he will drill air through the bottom of each buried tank so that a cavity will either emit cool or warm air (depending on temperature of the water at a given time). Mr. Due also plans on planting grass upon the air chiller itself.
Aquaponics

The second project is a long term venture. It involves the renovation of a facility in the Town of Roseto. Mr. Due and his wife are transitioning into the aquaponics industry but will maintain their fish farm.

Aquaponics is a system in which the raising of fish and the growing of plants hydroponically (without soil) are combined into one sustainable system.

Source: http://theaquaponicsource.com/what-is-aquaponics/
Other Entrepreneurial Projects

The Dues hope to create a sustained symbiotic relationship between their current fish farm and the aquaponics facility. The Roseto facility will not only house the Dues’ aquaponics farm but may also include a floor for a bait and tackle shop, a small cafe, and a floor with batting cages for the local High School softball team.

Mr. Due hopes that this new building will not only provide the Slate Belt with fresh fish and vegetables, but also a sense of community as he invites the youth to participate in recreational activities. What will he do next?
David Due: Why this video?

Mr. Due is a well-established entrepreneur in the Slate Belt who is constantly looking for new ways to improve and to expand his noteworthy businesses. Although he started in the construction industry, Mr. Due seamlessly transitioned into the fish farming industry because he was enthusiastic in pursuing a passion of his.

The Tech Clinic hopes that Mr. Due will inspire the youth in the local communities to find something they are interested in, perhaps even relating to fish, so that they may pursue a career out of it.
Meet Frank Russo

Mr. Frank Russo is the owner of Tellus Underground Technology, Inc (Tellus). His company is responsible for designing ground breaking engineering technology that removes underground material that may obstruct utility infrastructure.
Frank Russo: what problem?

Drawing upon his engineering background, Mr. Russo found that construction companies were hitting the subsurface utility lines, which could cause dangerous effects such as the destruction of homes and lives.

Source: cenews.com

Source: nola.com
Frank Russo: Solution to the problem

Therefore, Mr. Russo took it upon himself to fix this problem by creating new vacuum excavation technology. His vehicles are the product of innovation in that he is first person to mount a ground vacuum upon a truck. Even though his business is located in the Slate Belt, he operates worldwide.

Source: tellusunderground.com
In addition to vacuum excavation, Tellus uses its own tools and equipment to locate, repair and replace subsurface utility infrastructure through small, precisely controlled excavations. This technology is more cost-effective and safer for companies who conduct their work on subsurface utilities as opposed to those with larger equipment, such as backhoes.

Sources: tellusunderground.com; gastechnology.org
Frank Russo: Why this video?

After recognizing this problem, Mr. Russo solved it through vacuum excavation technology at Tellus.

With this technology, Tellus has expanded its inventory to facilitate the operations of construction companies by implementing keyhole technology. Not only did Tellus solve the problem for monetary gain, but also for the greater good.
Collaborations: Channel 69

Tech Clinic determined that one viable option for encouraging the youth to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities was to collaborate with the local television channels. As a result, the Tech Clinic contacted Mr. Brad Rinehart, the News Director of Channel 69, to discuss the ways in which we could work together to televise the videos, which in turn could inspire youth to pursue economic and entrepreneurial opportunities in the Slate Belt.
Collaborations: Channel 69

Through email correspondence, Mr. Rinehart supported the collaboration with the Tech Clinic and considered how to exhibit the videos as they are approximately three minutes apiece. There appears to be a few different ways in which the Tech Clinic and Channel 69 can collaborate: either through the main broadcasting channel or through their Business Matters Program.

Conclusion

● The Tech Clinic group of 2015 hopes that the creation of a website will provide relevant resources on entrepreneurship for high school students in the Slate Belt. It will also allow the videos to be located in a central location for optimal viewing.

● We believe the videos we have produced will inspire the youth to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and interesting career paths as the videos are visually engaging and short. They highlight local entrepreneurs and successful local businessmen and women.

● Overall, the Tech Clinic aims to encourage entrepreneurship and to spur interest in different types of career paths by providing resources for the youth, which in turn may increase economic development in the Slate Belt.
Appendices

Some important information in regards to the two nationally recognized organizations mentioned in the body of the report: Junior Achievement (JA) and Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), are included here in the appendix in the following order:

A. Junior Achievement Programs
B. Stroudsburg High School FBLA report
C. Letter from Stroudsburg High School to other schools in the Slate Belt region interested in FBLA
Appendix A: Junior Achievement

JA sponsors a variety of programs. We have identified the one that best aligns with our mission: JA Be Entrepreneurial. The figure on the right describes the elements of the program. The key for the success of any JA program is to identify dedicated community volunteers to manage the programs.
Starting a JA program:

**Step 1:** JA programs are run entirely by volunteers. In the United States alone, the organization has more than 213,000 volunteers. Volunteers are thoroughly trained to perform effectively in a classroom environment, and are also provided with plenty of teaching materials.

The first step in starting a new JA program in a school is to identify willing community volunteers.
Appendix A: Junior Achievement

Starting a JA program:

Step 1 continued: The following is the profile of one of the most engaging volunteers working with JA. Hopefully this will provide some inspiration to anyone interested in being a volunteer.

Becky Hamilton - Enterprise Support Delivery Manager, SAP Americas, Inc.

Becky Hamilton has been involved with Junior Achievement since 2012. She started as a volunteer mentor in the JA Company Program, and became a co-coordinator in 2014. Becky, along with her co-lead Brian Jones, coordinates 15-20 volunteers and 20 students each week from November to April. Becky also serves as the coordinator for SAP’s JA in a Day with Maple-Hewitt School District, which takes place during SAP’s October Month of Service. She is responsible for organizing over 35 volunteers at four elementary schools in the district.

Her previous volunteer experience and background in education made Becky a great fit for Junior Achievement. When asked what drew her to the program, Becky responded, “It provided me an opportunity to work with students and volunteer my time to a valuable program of which I am greatly passionate about. As I have a career path with SAP and not education, being able to work with students was something that was missing and I knew I still wanted to be a part of empowering our future leaders. The JA Company Program opened this whole new world for me.”

Becky’s warm smile, welcoming personality and overall kindness has an effect on everyone. She is one of the reasons that many students return year after year to SAP for the JA Company Program. “Over the last two years in the JA program, I had the pleasure of knowing Becky – one of the most energetic and creative people I have ever met,” commented Julie Lee, a returning student. “With her contagious smile and encouraging attitude, she spreads positive energy to everyone around her, making it impossible not to have an enjoyable atmosphere. Becky’s dedication and passion has inspired me in brand new ways, and I am looking forward to working with her again this coming year.”

Junior Achievement of Southeastern Pennsylvania chose Becky for the Volunteer Spotlight because she is a shining example of a JA volunteer who goes above and beyond their role. She is always willing to offer a helping hand, whether to a fellow volunteer, student, or staff member. Her commitment and enthusiasm is apparent with everything that she does. “I say it to just about anyone who will listen when talking about volunteering. One of the best decisions I made working at SAP was becoming a mentor for the JA Company Program because of the incredible students, the dedicated mentors (I am now lucky to call friends) and the supportive staff of JA of Southeastern Pa. To say I am proud of what the students accomplish each year would be a true understatement and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of something so special.”

Thank you to Becky for your volunteer work, and good luck with the 2015-2016 year!”
Appendix A: Junior Achievement

Starting a JA program:

**Step 2:** Once several community volunteers have been identified, the next step is to contact the regional office of JA where the school is located. In the case of the Slate Belt, that would be the office of Southeastern Pennsylvania.

A lot more information about this process can be found in their website: [http://japhiladelphia.org](http://japhiladelphia.org) or by contacting the director of the office: Laura Yohe at [laura.yohe@ja.org](mailto:laura.yohe@ja.org) or at (610) 230-3379.
An FBLA chapter provides a variety of incredibly valuable experience for high school students. FBLA promotes financial education and competitiveness across their members. The activities in which the members of the FBLA members engage with range from public speaking competitions to trips to national conferences and talks.
Appendix B: Future Business Leaders of America

Stroudsburg High School’s FBLA chapter performance is proof of the effectiveness of the program. As can be seen in the images attached below of Stroudsburg High School’s annual report, FBLA is an incredible platform to promote entrepreneurship in the youth.
Appendix B: Future Business Leaders of America

FBLA annual report continued.
Appendix B: Future Business Leaders of America

FBLA annual report continued.
Appendix C: Stroudsburg FBLA Recruitment letter

Stroudsburg High School’s FBLA chapter has been actively encouraging other high schools to start their own FBLA chapter. The following image shows a letter sent to Notre Dame High School encouraging them to start their own FBLA chapter.
Appendix C: Stroudsburg FBLA Recruitment letter

Starting an FBLA chapter:

**Step 1:** the key to the success of any FBLA chapter is to identify an engaging and committed faculty chapter adviser and to have an interested student body.

**Step 2:** After the faculty advisor has been identified, the process of starting the local chapter is rather simple and can be accomplished entirely online by visiting the FBLA official website at: [www.pafbla.org](http://www.pafbla.org) and clicking in the Organizing a Chapter tab.
Appendix C: Stroudsburg FBLA Recruitment letter

Alternative to a local FBLA chapter:

Students that may be interested in the opportunities that FBLA provides can join the Pennsylvania virtual chapter. This is also a simple process and can be accomplished entirely online by visiting the FBLA official website at: www.pafbla.org

In any case, the president and the faculty advisor of Stroudsburg High School's FBLA chapter expressed a sincere interest in helping other high schools in the process of getting involved with FBLA. The faculty advisor Katy Sickler can be contacted at kcsickle@sburg.org