

# children's PRESSLINE

## Youth learn business with a dose of ethics

By **PRINCESS WEEKES**

According to the teens who competed in the recent National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, there are lots of ways to make a buck. But the best way uses socially responsible business practices.

The winner of the competition, Jessica Cervantes, 18, of Miami, won the judges over with her Popsy Cakes—cupcakes on an edible stick—because they are as easy on the environment as they are on the taste buds. To sweeten the deal, she plans on donating 5 percent of her annual income to the Breast Cancer Foundation.

Cervantes is just one of 35

zation that provides entrepreneurial education programs to young people.

The other semi-finalists, Rodney Walker, 18, from Chicago, and Amanda Loyola, 15, from New York, as well as the others who competed, spoke on how they wanted to give back to others by offering new opportunities or just looking out for the world they live in.

Walker, cocreator of Forever Life Music & Video Productions, says, “To be an ethical business leader it takes drive, it takes passion, it takes a lot of hard work and determination, and, above all, it takes belief.” Walker also has plans for helping others with a love



**Ethical leadership is “all about trust,” says NFTE competitors Naomi and Noemi Romero, whose company, Cosfurs, makes animal masks for people interested in a type of costume play, known as cosplay.**

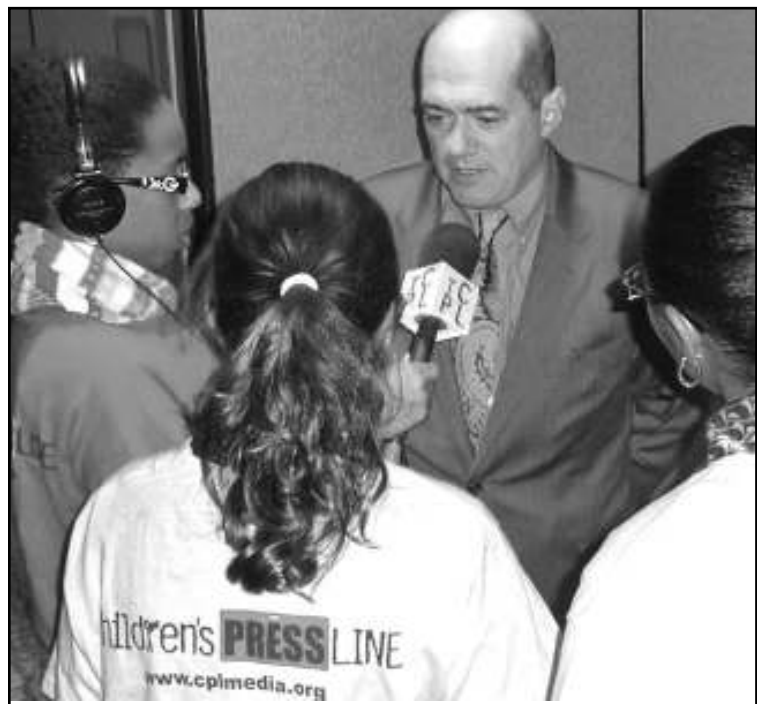


**Miami teen Jessica Cervantes, 18, was named the winner of OppenheimerFunds/NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge for her Popsy Cakes dessert. She will donate 5 percent of the dessert's proceeds to breast cancer research.**

teens from across the country who competed to win a \$10,000 prize sponsored by the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), a non-profit organi-

zation for music and video by one day offering scholarships and internships through his company.

Loyola has a more earth-friendly agenda with her



**NFTE founder Steve Marioti told CPL that he is proud that his organization has provided young people with socially conscious business skills.**

product, EcoDog Treats. Her product is not only made of environmentally safe products, but the wrapping will also be made of recyclable material.

“I hope that through my business, which is ecologically friendly, I will be helping the environment,” she says.

Diana Spencer, vice president of NFTE, says that the competition helps teach kids how to become successful and conscious business leaders. “The kids learn to follow a plan, and they learn about ethics and being honest and forthright business people in everything they do,” she says. “That’s a critical lesson in business.”

Naomi and Noemi Romero, twin 16-year-old co-competitors, have realized the amount of trust it takes to run their Internet business, Cosfurs, an animal cosplay masks company. Cosplay, short for costume play, is an activity where people dress up in elaborate costumes to replicate fictional characters, like those in Japanese animation.

“My business is run entirely out of trust. I never meet any of my customers,” says Noemi. “They send me measurements, I build it and I send it off to them. It’s all about trust.”

Being trustworthy, ethical leaders is a strong element of the NFTE philosophy, especially when the youth see fewer adult role models in the business community surfacing during the recent economic downturn.

“I think that there’s been

focus on making my business prosperous and making my business profitable, I’m going to profit and make my business prosper.”

Patricia Alper, owner of the Alper Portfolio Group and a competition attendee, says that the current economic situation may be a great asset for these young entrepreneurs. “I think the skills that these kids are learning hedge against a bad market,” she says. “I think that this is where it’s at for our future.”

NFTE alumni Rahfeal Gordon, who started his businesses (RahGor Moti-



**Rodney Walker, 18, won second place for his Forever Life Music & Video Productions business plan. He plans to offer scholarships and internships through his company.**

enough information out there of people who have been unethical and who have paid for it,” Spencer says. “I think that they’ll probably be tempted but hopefully won’t be unethical.”

Despite the current financial atmosphere, Walker has tried to remain positive about the economy. “I wouldn’t focus too much of my attention on that because if I focus on the recession, I’m going to get the recession,” he says. “But if I

ventions and RahGor Publishing) while homeless, is thinking about the future, too. “Today is just for the moment,” he says. “Tomorrow you might have a bigger place. You might have a bigger company. You might have more clients. You just have to look at it like tomorrow is always better.”

**Additional reporting by Anna Arena, 13; Tatyana Bellamy Walker, 12; and Kevin Chen, 10**

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