

Mitchell student wins Ontario's Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist Award

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A 20-year-old Mitchell resident who opened his business when he was 15 has won the Ontario Provincial Student Entrepreneur of the Year Finalist Award.

Brent Schneider, owner and operator of Schneider's Computing and Websites, gave a presentation on his business to a panel of 12 judges at the Marriott Eaton Centre in Toronto March 12-14. Competitors had to demonstrate hard work, passion, determination, growth, success, lessons learned, business fundamentals and vision.

He advanced into the top six to present his business to a new panel of judges and moved on to the top four. When the top four made their presentations, all received the same score, said Mr. Schneider.

In an attempt to break the four-way tie, competitors presented their business again to a new panel of judges. Again, the top four all received the same score but only two could move on to the national competition, which offered a grand prize of \$10,000, said Mr. Schneider.

The judges basically drew names from a hat to decide who would move on, he said. Mr. Schneider's name wasn't drawn. The top two winners were to receive a cash prize of \$1,000. However, the judges said they all had great businesses. They didn't think it was fair that two people received a cash prize of \$1,000 just from the luck of the draw, so the prize was split four ways.

Mr. Schneider ended up coming home with a medal, plaque and \$500, he said. "I was a little bit disappointed because I wanted to represent central Canada against Eastern and Western Canada," he said. "But I was happy with the overall result."

Mr. Schneider started the business out of his home when he was 15 years old after receiving a \$3,000 grant from the Summer Company. In June 2007 he started an online store and by November 2007 he opened a store in Mitchell, said Mr. Schneider. "It's been really accepted by the community," he said. "I'm busy all the time."

Schneider's Computing and Websites offers electronic sales, corporate sales for Dell Computers Canada, web design, domain registration, web hosting and e-commerce solutions. Mr. Schneider operates the store full time Monday through Saturday from 9am to 6pm. "It's been enough to keep me going and get me through university full time," he said.

Mr. Schneider is in the management and organizational studies program at the University of Western Ontario. The university has a Sife team, which is a group of business students who compete against students from other universities, he said. The organizers are encouraging Mr. Schneider to join the team. "They think

I would put Western on the map for the Sife team,” he said.

Mr. Schneider has also been nominated by the Stratford Chamber of Commerce for the Young Entrepreneur Award of Excellence in May.