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Business Savvy

Young Entrepreneurs Honored With Award For Their Accomplishments

One is a former Miss Jersey who recently tripled the size of her business. Another founded an entertainment company with an affordable digital jukebox system. Another owns a traveling massage business that caters to individuals and businesses in their own location.

For their accomplishments in the business world, seven 20-somethings have been named Emerging Young Entrepreneurs of Southern New Jersey by Miles Technologies and the Entrepreneurs Forum of Southern New Jersey, in cooperation with Rowan University.

The awards, begun in 2005 by Chris Miles, recognize entrepreneurs under the age of 30 who have built unique and successful businesses.

"It feels great to be recognized this early in the game," said 22-year-old Thomas Pote, who owns Mobile Massage. "I saw an opportunity that no one had really capitalized in this area."

Pote and his three therapists travel to locations throughout the tri-state area to bring all the essentials of spa massage to their clients. Right now he's focusing on growth and making sure the business keeps generating money.

"It's never as easy as you hope or plan," said Pote, who resides in Pitman. "I was used to being employee not the owner."

Pote graduated from Rowan University in May with a Bachelors degree in Health Promotion and Fitness Management. Three other awardees are also current or former Rowan students. Jay Shoemaker, who graduated in May, and Stephen Gill, who will be a senior in the fall, are both a part of Rowan University's nationally ranked Entrepreneurship Program in the business school. Rowan's program was ranked 17th out of 700 in the nation by the Princeton Review and Entrepreneur Magazine. Lindsay Hoffman is a public relations major.

"You've got to have passion, energy and enthusiasm. They really love what they're doing," said Dr. Robert D'Intino, entrepreneurship program coordinator and associate professor of management. "Entrepreneurship students are really fun to teach. They're already self motivated."

For 22-year-old Jay Shoemaker, the founding of Shoemaker Entertainment in May was a continuation of a disc jockey business he had run since 1998. Winning Rowan's first-ever business plan competition helped provide him with the start-up funds to focus on the digital jukebox rental jukebox market.

"I always knew I wanted to own my own business," he said. "I went through high school and college with the (DJ) business. I appreciate the acknowledgment received from Miles, they motivate me."

Unlike some of the other awardees, 26-year-old Julie Robenhymer did not have much of a business background when she took over Mullica Hill Bridal, now the Dress Shop at Mullica Hill, in 2004.

"Growing up I always said I wanted to own a dress shop," said Robenhymer, a former Miss Jersey. "Opportunity knocked three years ago when I was 23. I was very hesitant since I didn't have a background in business, but fortunately I surrounded myself with people to show me the ropes. It's great to know I haven't even had this store three years and I've been able to accomplish so much in a short amount of time."

Other award winners include Gill, who owns NoLimit Solutions, a full service Internet Marketing Agency specializing in pay-per-performance marketing, and Hoffman, who started Achilles Pawblic Relations, a voluntary public relations service for non-profit animal shelters and associations. Gwendolyn Faulkner of Cherry Hill leads Faulkner Financial, while Dr. Melissa Josselson is currently building a career in South Jersey as a naturopathic doctor.

Many people don't open their own businesses until later in life, but these entrepreneurs are glad to be making their marks at a young age.

"I realize my youth is an advantage," Robenhymer said. "I have lot of energy because I don't have a family or anything I need to be concerned with. I can work all day every day if I need to."

2007 Emerging Young Entrepreneurs of Southern New Jersey

• Jay Shoemaker, 22, Shoemaker Entertainment

Jay Shoemaker is a 2007 graduate of Rowan University's business administration program with a specialization in entrepreneurship. Shoemaker founded Shoemaker Entertainment, which offers a digital Jukebox system as an affordable, high impact alternative to hiring a live DJ. For more information, visit www.shoemakerentertainment.com.

• Thomas Pote, 22, Mobile Massage

Pitman native and Rowan graduate Thomas Pote established Mobile Massage in October 2006. Pote, a certified massage therapist who trained at the Institute of Holistic Studies, and his staff provide onsite massages to individuals and businesses in the tri-state area. For more information, call 609-502-4634.

• Julie Robenhymer, 26, Dress Shop at Mullica Hill

Former Miss New Jersey Julie Robenhymer, recently tripled the size of Mullica Hill Bridal and renamed it Dress Shop at Mullica Hill. The expanding company now includes prom dresses, cocktail dresses, evening wear and guests of the wedding attire. A business owner for almost three years, Robenhymer was also named Emerging Young Entrepreneur last year also. For more information, call 223-8868.

- Stephen Gill, 21, NoLimit Solutions

Rowan University student Stephen Gill started his first business at the age of 13. Founded in 2005, NoLimit Solutions is a full service Internet marketing agency specializing in pay-per-performance marketing. Prior to NoLimit he had owned two previous businesses.

- Lindsay Hoffman, 23, Achilles Pawblic Relations

Lindsay Hoffman, a public relations major at Rowan University, had a vision for a new breed of public relations -- public relations for and about animals. In late 2006, Hoffman started Achilles Pawblic Relations, a voluntary public relations service for non-profit animal shelters and associations.

- Gwendolyn A. Faulkner, age 26, Faulkner Financial -- Gwendolyn Faulkner leads Faulkner Financial, which offers financial planning services to individuals and families. Faulkner, a graduate of West Chester University, is also the president of Tri-County Chapter New Jersey Association of Women Business Owners -- the largest Women Business Owner Organization in the country, with over 80 members in Burlington, Camden and Gloucester counties.

- Dr. Melissa Josselson, age 28 -- Dr. Melissa Josselson is currently building a career in South Jersey as a naturopathic doctor. Josselson, a 1997 graduate of Cherry Hill High School East, earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Pittsburgh, pre-med with a bachelor of science in psychology in 2001. Then, Josselson headed west to Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine Arizona -- an accredited naturopathic medical school, one of only four in the United States. She graduated with a Doctor of Naturopathic Medicine (ND) degree in 2006.

