

Students impress business world



Entrepreneurial students at the University of Worcester have impressed Worcestershire's business world with a range of innovative ideas.

It was the concept of a Care for Life service, designed to ease pressure on NHS services, which won the £2,000 Business Enterprise award. Created by Health and Business Studies students, Lisa Porter and Paul Raynes, their plan included providing a range of individual health measures, such as highlighting any immediate vacancies in care homes, to take pressure off hospital beds. Other short listed proposals included a one-stop-shop website offering sports science knowledge to athletes, an instant mobile T-shirt printing facility, and a new form of house water pump designed to recycle water. The Bizcom initiative, backed by the Mercia Institute of Enterprise involved students submitting and pitching their business proposals to a panel of experts, which included Christine Jones, chief executive of the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire, Frazer Bufton from Panton Sargent and Nick Cotter from Trans4mation in Evesham.



Christine Jones said that judging the business initiative competition at the University was "one of the highlights of her year". "It was a delight to judge such thoroughly researched business plans. There was lots of enthusiasm and passion shown by all the participants, and many of these ideas could be easily started up in a matter of months. "It's pleasing that the University is increasingly developing business access and ideas for its students, something which will only increase with the growth of its future new campus." Andrew Corcoran, Venture Development Manager, at the University of Worcester said; "We've now developed a range of business initiatives throughout the year, which are attracting students from across the University's academic schools. There is a hive of innovation on campus, and these business and enterprise schemes source and tap into that student creativity." For further information on business schemes at the University contact Andrew Corcoran on 01905 855430 or e-mail: a.corcoran@worc.ac.uk

Left to right: Health and Business Studies students, Paul Raynes and Lisa Porter, receiving their £2,000 Business Enterprise Award from Christine Jones, chief executive of the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Wragge & Co advises NFU Mutual on sale of Country Mutual Insurance Brokers

Wragge & Co LLP Corporate Group has advised NFU Mutual on the sale of its insurance broker division, Country Mutual Insurance Brokers, to the Towergate Partnership. Country Mutual is a top 30 UK insurance broker and controls over £130 million gross written premium. Commission income in 2005 was £20.5 million. The sale enables NFU Mutual to realise a strong asset and focus its full attention on developing its core general and life insurance business.

Corporate director William Brewis led the Wragge & Co team assisted by Natalie Mudd, Amy Petersons, Marion Cail and Kristin Garrett. A wider team of tax, property, employment, pensions, antitrust and commercial specialists provided additional advice. William Brewis said: "NFU Mutual is a key player, a respected name in the insurance market and one of our major financial services sector clients. Our Financial Services Team offers sector-focused expertise across a full range of disciplines, ensuring clients benefit from excellent legal and commercial advice that really understands their market."

Jeremy Diston who led the NFU Mutual Team said: "As ever, the Wragge & Co team provided high quality and practical advice to us. They really understand our business and, just as importantly, the way we operate. Working with them meant we could approach this sale with real confidence."

NFU Mutual is the UK's leading rural insurer, offering products including general insurance, life, pensions, investments and risk management services. Headquartered in Stratford-Upon-Avon, NFU Mutual has 300 offices throughout the UK. Wragge & Co has an ongoing relationship with NFU Mutual, advising on a range of issues. This is the firm's largest corporate instruction from NFU Mutual. DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary UK LLP advised Towergate.

Wragge & Co's 17-partner national Corporate Group includes more than 60 lawyers advising on a full range of corporate finance matters. M&A and disposal work in the past six months has included two acquisitions for VT Group plc, a £180 million cross-border acquisition for ADP, Inc, the £322 million sale of Paragon Healthcare and a first deal for DHL.



Chamber Patron shortlisted for Orange National Business Award

Innovative storage company Whitefoot-Forward Ltd based in Hartlebury, near Kidderminster has been selected as one of only four finalists in the prestigious National Business Awards for the Midlands and East of England Growth Strategy of the Year.

Sponsored by Orange, The National Business Awards are recognised as the UK's 'Business Oscars' and have been established to reward and recognise the importance of both national and regional business excellence. "We are delighted to receive this nomination. It's a wonderful reflection of what our strategic growth strategy has achieved," said Michael Whitefoot, managing director of Whitefoot-Forward.

"In a short space of time we have moved from humble beginnings to a healthy business competing successfully with major name players. To do that we have always paid careful attention to managing our costs, whilst delivering good service levels and adding on complementary initiatives to benefit our clients.

"In the past three years alone these have included diversification into a range of additional 'smart storage' solutions; the introduction of a unique on-line data package; our warehouse facility expansion to 82,000 sq ft; and the fourfold increase in staff numbers." The winners will be announced at the National Business Awards - Midlands and East of England Awards Dinner - on July, 6 2006 at the Burlington Hotel, Birmingham.

Whitefoot-Forward is the Midlands' most innovative and respected independent supplier of 'smart storage' solutions; providing services that enable customers to save thousands of pounds, improve efficiency and free up valuable space. Services include records management; a pick, pack & dispatch operation; pallet storage; domestic and business container storage; de-clutter service; and a newly launched fleet replenishment service.



Chamber teams up with patron to offer new service

Integratech has joined forces with the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire to devise two brand new offers to its clients and Chamber members. Any Chamber member signing up to Integratech's IT Support Services will be able to take advantage of a 5 percent monthly discount. Integratech can provide a tailored Support Package to suit any IT

requirement to companies throughout the area. In addition to this an exclusive deal has been negotiated to offer Integratech's clients 5 percent off the price of IT Training through the Chamber of Commerce's "Institute of IT Training" accredited training department. This is in addition to the discount already received by Chamber members. So if you are a Chamber member and an Integratech client you

could save a total of 15 percent for each delegate! For further details of these offers please contact David Rogers at Integratech on 0870 366 1 366 or email davidr@integratech.co.uk



For more information about becoming a Chamber Patron
Email enquiries@hwchamber.co.uk or call 0845 641 1641

SaaS-y service on offer

If you have ever visited www.hwchamber.co.uk, the home page to the Chamber of Commerce Herefordshire and Worcestershire, you may have noticed a small logo in the left hand corner, entitled 'Enabled by iRevolution'. iRevolution was founded more than 10 years ago to provide cost effective IT solutions to meet the real business needs of small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

iRevolution began life as a systems integrator, providing IT integration services and financial business applications to a range of SMEs across all market sectors. Spurred on by the growth of the Internet as a viable and cost effective new channel for delivering IT applications, iRevolution became one of the UK's pioneers behind a managed service or SaaS (Software as a Service) offering.

Today, iRevolution provides a wide range of business management applications, IT service management and software development solutions, and offers these to companies both delivered on site in the traditional manner and as hosted solutions. In Partnership with Computer Associates, iRevolution recently launched a new service, iASSIST. iASSIST is a remote 24/7 server monitoring service, designed for small to medium businesses who need to minimise server downtime and its impact on the organisation, yet cannot justify the costs of adding

more hardware, people, and monitoring tools. iRevolution is a member of the Hamsard Group and has headquarters near Heathrow. For more information about iRevolution, please visit www.irevolution.com, call 01895 444 420 or email info@irevolution.com.

