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Partnership Announces Business Plan Competition Winners

Doug Wilson, an entrepreneur from Burlington, has won the 2009 Des Moines County Business Plan Competition administered by the Greater Burlington Partnership. Kyle Carruthers of Burlington and Martin James of Middletown received honorable mention awards.

As the winner of the competition, Wilson and his business, Great River Materials, will receive a \$3,000 seed capital grant. Carruthers and James will receive grant awards of \$1,500 each.

“This is the second year for the competition, and the bar has certainly been raised,” said Jason Hutcheson, administrator of the Partnership’s annual competition. “Each of these business plans has merit, and our review panel was impressed by the quality of the proposals submitted.”

Wilson’s business will locate its office personnel in Downtown Burlington and will receive an additional \$1,200 in rental assistance from Downtown Partners. The company will serve a wide variety of customers with materials such as crushed limestone, sand, and gravel. Even though the economy is challenging right now, Wilson believes there are opportunities for success.

“The job market is tough,” explained Wilson. “Our decision to start Great River Materials was one of passion for the business and the necessity to survive.”

Carruthers will use a portion of his award to defray insurance costs for his new business, Lad and Dad Storage. Carruthers, 24, plans to break ground in July and open his storage business by late August or early September.

James will use his award to create a web site for his specialty coffee business, The Blind Bean. James, who lost his sight several years ago, plans to run his business almost entirely by telephone and over the internet.

“It takes guts. If you are passionate about your business and willing to use all of the resources available to you, your chance for success is much greater than if you don’t,” admitted Wilson when asked what advice he has for others thinking about starting a new business. “I carried our

plan around 24 hours a day for weeks, if not months. I talked to anyone and everyone that could make a difference.”

In order to complete the competition, participants had to take a business plan writing course offered by Southeastern Community College. After the course, each participant submitted a draft copy of the business plan that was scored and constructively criticized. The finalists then gave an oral presentation to a review panel. The Small Business Development Center offered one-on-one coaching to help participants assemble and strengthen the business plans.

The Greater Burlington Partnership administers the annual competition and grant awards are funded from pledges received during the organization’s *Partnering for the Future* campaign. The 2010 Des Moines County Business Plan Competition will launch in January. For more information, log on to www.GrowBurlington.com.