

## WITH THE HELP OF RCEF...

### Inventors Awarded at Minnesota Inventors Congress 2001

- Sam Fasnacht received three awards for his "Valley King" product used for trimming roof shingles.
- Jerry Dehn received two awards for his garage floor containment mat for vehicles.
- Larry Glaubitz received one award for his patented jack-o-lantern, a wrought-iron yard decoration used to hold a pumpkin head.
- Rog Keller received one award for his ambulance boat used for emergency water rescues.

### Blue Earth County Fair Hosts First-time "Inventors and New Entrepreneur's Exhibit"

- Sam Fasnacht received the Bill Carlson Award for "Most Promising Invention" for "Valley King," an invention used for trimming roof shingles.
- Joanna Hess received the Sal Frederick Award for "Service to Individuals" for her "New Life and Music" entrepreneurial business.
- Don Pehrson received the Eldon Jones Award for "Manufacturing Business Entrepreneurial Merit" for "Eco Crete," a novel building products innovation using recycled materials.
- One Bright Star received the Sir Henry Wellcome Trust "People's Choice Award" for its non-profit organization established to support families and individuals who have lost a child.
- Sam Fasnacht received the V-TEK (Dennis Seimer) Award for "Best Technical Innovation" for "Valley King," an invention used for trimming roof shingles.
- The Blue Earth County Ag Society Gold Award went to One Bright Star for "Most Inspirational."
- The Blue Earth County Ag Society Silver Award went to Engineering Concepts (John Petering) for "Most Persistent" for the novel innovation to eliminate odor from hog and dairy operations as well as enhancing the by-product for field application.
- The Blue Earth County Ag Society Bronze Award went to "Switch A Hitch" (Robert Schroeder) for "Ingenuity" for the invention of a hitch with interchangeable/multiple hitch balls. **BECC**

## Riverbend Center for Enterprise Development Provides Springboard for "Business Technology Advisors (BTA)"



*Kurt Schroeder launches Business Technology Advisors with the help of the Riverbend Center for Enterprise Development.*

Kurt Schroeder always knew he had the right combination of skills to start his own business -- what he didn't have was the roadmap to get there. Milt Toratti with the Riverbend Center for Enterprise Facilitation gave Schroeder the tools he needed to get started, which included help with a business development and organizational plan, a marketing strategy, and some feedback regarding BTA's structure and objectives.

Over the last year Schroeder has been working to make BTA a full-time reality, and is now offering information technology services to small to medium-size businesses out of the Mankato TechPlus building on Premier Drive. Schroeder says the biggest challenge for businesses is the under-utilization of technology as a tool to solve business problems, and that his services are built on the following three outcomes: (1) How to reduce costs of technology, (2) Measuring efficiencies with technology, and (3) Contributing to revenue and profit growth with the use of technology.

Schroeder says his first and foremost goal is to encourage clients to think about how to use technology, rather than assuming technology will do it for them.

"Many businesses are unaware of the significant financial return that can be realized through the investment of technology," says Schroeder. For instance, Schroeder uses the example of company newsletter dissemination. "The annual printing and postage costs for a company newsletter can be significant; however, these costs can be easily eliminated through an online newsletter that is automatically sent to subscribers by email," says Schroeder with regard to the consultative services he is able to offer. "Another example is payroll services. Collecting time cards and entering data can be labor intensive," says Schroeder. "Collecting time-card information can be simplified through the use of an intranet where employees enter their own information, and the data is automatically tabulated."

Schroeder is able to back up his consultative services with technical support, as well. His list of services includes, but is not limited to, network services; programming; internet, intranet, and extranet development; web hosting and web page development; and business-to-business e-commerce. Toratti calls Schroeder the "technology management wizard" because "Schroeder is the foremost expert in the region on how to use technology for management efficiency in any company."

"I would recommend BTA to any company, banking institution or bureaucracy willing to make meaningful change in how they operate," says Toratti.

With the help of RCEF, Schroeder's clientele has expanded to businesses in southern Minnesota and the Metro Area. Schroeder can be reached at Business Technology Advisors, (507) 385-3214, or [btadvise@hickorytech.net](mailto:btadvise@hickorytech.net).

The Riverbend Center for Enterprise Facilitation is funded by Blue Earth County and its consultative services are free to all residents. "RCEF has opened doors for several Blue Earth County entrepreneurs. Our goal is to improve our area's economy by providing residents with the tools they need for success," says Commissioner Al Bennett, RCEF Board Chair. If you are thinking about starting your own business, expanding your business, or inventing a new product, call Milt Toratti at 386-7285 or stop by RCEF's office in the Northwestern Office Building, 209 South 2nd St., Suite 310, Mankato. **BECC**