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Sarnia's Michael Kabat started Young Yarner enterprise last year

By Carl Hnatyshyn, QMI Agency Friday, June 5, 2015 2:51:21 EDT PM



Sixth-grade Rosedale Public School student Michael Kabat shows off the awards he recently received at the Student Stock Exchange gala in Montreal.

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He came, he saw — and he walked away with a handful of awards.

Michael Kabat, Sarnia's 11-year-old homemade scarf-maker, earned both high praise and a heap of awards at a recent Montreal gala show that recognized the business acumen of young Canadians from across Ontario and Quebec.

The young entrepreneur was recognized by the Student Stock Exchange organization for his Young Yarner enterprise — Kabat's scarf-making business that has already raised over \$200 for Noelle's Gift charity.

The sixth-grade Rosedale Public School stunned his high school competitors by sweeping up four awards, including Best Social Media, Best Marketing, the Entrepreneurs for Others Award (recognizing philanthropic work done in the community) and the coveted People's Choice Award.

"Well I was really, really happy — insanely happy — because everybody picked me," he said. "And since it was a Quebec awards ceremony, I was freaking out because I never thought I'd win an award."

While Kabat wasn't able to make the trip to Montreal for the May 20 awards show, he, his family and his mentor, fifth-grade Rosedale Public School teacher Deb Lumley, watched the event from home, communicating with the audience and judges via Skype.

Kabat and his Young Yarner fan club were hopeful he would win an award or possibly two, but as the evening progressed it dawned on them that he and his business had made a huge splash with both the judges and the gala crowd.

"We were just excited that Michael made it to the nomination stage," Lumley said. "And then he made it to the first round and then when we Skyped in they told us that he had won two awards and that he should be prepared to make a speech. And so we were all just cheering."

Kabat's speech and detailed explanation of both his business and his charity work made such an impression on the judges and audience that he managed to nab a further two awards, including the People's Choice Award.

Since last October, the budding businessman has created and sold hundreds of colourful scarves and has donated part of his profits to charity.

How Kabat went from a mild-mannered sixth-grade student to yarn mogul is a compelling story.

His foray into the scarf-making business was born from a broken iPad. Last fall, the youngster inadvertently cracked his electronic device and brainstormed ways to raise some money to replace it.

A few short months later, Kabat loomed and crocheted his way to the top, selling attractive, affordable scarves both online and at local kids' clothing store Esby & Soph, in the process deciding to donate \$2 from every scarf sold to Noelle's Gift.

Along with the time-consuming business of making scarves for both adults and kids, Kabat expanded his business to include headbands, neck warmers and even scarves for his sister's American Girl doll collection.

Lumley knew that Kabat's story was one that should be shared with a broader audience.

"I was very excited for Michael. I was determined to find some competition I could enter him in and was lucky enough to come upon these awards," she said.

I think (Michael) deserves recognition for his hard work and what he does not only at school but also within the community. He just needed to be recognized," she continued. "Michael took it to a whole new level."

As for Kabat, he said that while he was happy to receive the awards, his plans for the summer are not build up his inventory in time for scarf season next fall.

Through his scarf sales since last October, he has gathered enough of a profit to replace his old iPad. And he will continue to donate \$2 from every scarf to Noelle's Gift, his preferred charity.

What will he do with the rest of his money?

"I'm going to save it up for college," he said thoughtfully, before breaking out in a grin. "Or buy some more yarn. I'm not sure yet."

For more information about the Student Stock Exchange awards, where Michael's Young Yarner business is highlighted, visit www.ssx.ca.

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