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Entrepreneur of the Year goes to two

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Equity Reporter

CAMPBELL'S BAY Oct. 21, 2010

The Société d'aide au développement de la collectivité (SADC) 25th anniversary festivities came to an end on Oct. 21 with a cocktail party and presentation of the Innovative Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award at Café Gig's in Campbell's Bay. The event took place as part of small business week, which began on Oct. 18 to promote entrepreneurship in Quebec.

Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres as they mingled with one another and waited for the presentations to begin.

Ray Stillwell, president of Green Investment Group Inc. and Sustainable Site Planning and Management (SSPM) Pontiac addressed the crowd telling them about the intention to develop the 2,200 acre Smurfit Stone site into a regional industrial park.

"The industrial park is about you, it's about Pontiac," said Stillwell. "We are all going to ensure the park prospers and if the park prospers, so does Pontiac. The industrial park has already begun to rise form the ashes."

The park would create about 200 jobs and steps have already been taken to get the site ready, said Stillwell. Engineers have prepared a conceptual plan, which shows the site being cut up into 74 lots.

"We already have businesses looking at which lot they want for their business," he said.

Louise Donaldson, executive director of the SADC, then announced the winners of the Innovative Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. She explained that the SADC selected a panel of judges from the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce made up of people who are long-time business owners.

"After looking at applicants, it became a difficult decision in the end," said Donaldson. "The panel debated for some time."

They selected two winners who they thought were equally deserving of the award, Graham Theren and Jan Von Taube who founded Green Force Initiative (GFI) two years ago, and Ray Bretzloff who founded Pure Life Adventures in 2009.

GFI is an alternative energy company specializing in solar panels and

geothermal systems. Pure Life Adventures focuses on the tourism industry offering winter and summer adventures in Pontiac such as dog sledding, white water rafting, zip lining, snowshoeing and more.

Each company received a \$1,000 prize certificate to be used for professional communications and marketing services from Pontiac. They also received a free one year membership to the Chamber of Commerce.

Von Taube and Theren thanked the SADC and CLD saying, "You've been a big help to our business, we couldn't do it without you."

Von Taube said it was nice to feel appreciated. He and Theren were unaware that they would be winning the award until it was announced.

"People kept coming up to us saying 'Congratulations' and we were like 'For what?'" Von Taube laughed.

"We're here to support the community and it's nice that they support us back," Theren added.

Bretzloff said the \$1,000 would help him out a lot. He plans on using the money to purchase more banner signs for his company as well as a more impressive trade show booth.

"To get \$1,000 when you're living on a shoestring budget really helps take the pressure and financial stress off," said Bretzloff. "It's a huge deal."

He added that he thought the award ceremony was a great event and there was a lot of positive energy in the room.

After the ceremonies there was a draw and a few door prizes were given out. People continued to mingle with one another and discuss topics related to business.

"The event is great," said Donaldson. "It's a really good opportunity for business people to network."

Stillwell said he enjoyed the awards ceremony and was impressed with the work of GFI and Pure Life Adventures. He thinks GFI is a wonderful, sustainable business looking towards the future and that Pure Life Adventures is a great company to bring tourism into Pontiac since there are so many beautiful places to see here.

"It's nice to see the rural community show this much support to young business people," he said.

Please see PHOTOS page three

PHOTOS: Young Entrepreneur of the Year Awards (from page one)



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Ray Bretzloff receives a \$1,000 prize certificate. From left to right are Todd Hoffman, president of the Pontiac Chamber of Commerce, Ray Stillwell, president of Green Investment Group Inc., Ray Bretzloff of Pure Life Adventures and Louise Donaldson, executive director of the SADC.



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Jan Von Taube and Graham Theren receive a \$1,000 prize certificate after winning the Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award. From left to right are Todd Hoffman, Graham Theren from Green Force Initiative, Ray Stillwell, Jan Von Taube from Green Force Initiative and Louise Donaldson.