



## New program helps young entrepreneurs

### **Campbell River Mirror** **By Grant Warkentin**

It's not easy getting a bank loan when you're 18. But there's plenty of young entrepreneurs with ideas so great they can't help but be successful - all they need is some seed money to get started. That's where the Canadian Youth Business Foundation comes in.

"We are providing them with a leg up rather than a handout," said Kathy McReynolds, the foundation's vice-president in Western Canada.

On Wednesday, the foundation officially partnered with Campbell River's Community Futures Development Corporation of Strathcona. The foundation loans money to young entrepreneurs to help them turn their ideas into successful businesses.

"CYBF is pleased to have a key role in many cases that can make the aspirations of these young people come true," McReynolds said.

Coun. Morgan Ostler said she wished the program had been around when she wanted to start her first business. She praised the foundation for the opportunities it provides for eager young businesspeople. "You are bringing them one of the greatest gifts you can have and that's the joy of owning your own business," she said.

Campbell River is the 44th launch the foundation has done in Canada, part of an expansion in Western Canada. McReynolds said one of its current goals is to provide services for young entrepreneurs outside large city centres.

"We are looking to expand more in less urban areas," she said. McReynolds said the program's goal is to keep young people in their communities, in this case Campbell River, helping them find business opportunities in their hometowns.

The program lends money to young entrepreneurs at low interest rates. McReynolds said the point is to help people, not to make money from the loans - the foundation is a non-profit organization. Up to \$15,000 is available for each applicant and the applicant only pays interest for the first year of the loan. In the next year, once the applicant starts paying back the loan amount, interest rates are only a few points above prime.

McReynolds said most people who borrow money through the foundation end up paying back their loans early. That's because they typically have such great ideas, she said, adding that in her time with the foundation she's never seen an idea duplicated.

The program provides money but it also provides mentor services for young entrepreneurs. Anyone who borrows at least \$5,000 through the foundation to start a business has access to free advice and counselling from experienced business people.

Mark Crane of the Community Futures Development Corporation of Strathcona was glad Campbell River could be part of the program. "We're really pleased to be involved in this partnership," he said.

Crane said that young entrepreneurs don't get enough support. That's where the new partnership with the youth business foundation will make a difference, he said.