

CEO Jr.

Future generations learn about running a family business

If you ask children what they want to be when they grow up, you'll get pretty standard answers: a fireman, rock star, Spider-man. But 16-year-old Alex Stentz has always had a fairly unusual dream—to distribute and manufacture compressed gases and welding supplies.

Stentz's family owns Butler Gas Products in McKees Rocks. Last summer, Alex took part in the Family Enterprise Center's Junior Generation Program with other kids from family businesses, which make up 72 percent of the businesses in the Pittsburgh region, according to national research. Similar programs are being discussed for this summer.

Teaching Kids About Family Businesses

"We brought together a group of kids who were pre-employment age, starting at 9 years old, to teach them the dynamics of running a family business," says Ann Dugan, executive director of the University of Pittsburgh-based Institute for Entrepreneurial Excellence, which runs the Family Enterprise Center. "When kids visit their families' companies, they don't understand how difficult it is to run a business." The Junior Generation Program provides kids not only with fun learning experiences, but also a taste of the highs and lows.

Even though one of the coolest family businesses in Pittsburgh, the Steelers, helped run last year's program at its training center, Alex had a typical teenage response. "He expected it to be corny," laughs his mom, Debi Butler Stentz. "But he loved it. It put the pieces of the puzzle together—a lot of things finally made sense."

Real-Life Questions

The kids tackled questions such as, "What would you do if your sibling is leaving early?" As owners of a made-up soccer team, the group had to decide what to do when David Beckham wanted more money, and they had a limited budget. "Things are more delicate when co-work-



Alex Stentz has learned about running his family's business through the Junior Generation Program at the Family Enterprise Center.

ers are family, and more complicated when the family pocketbook and business are tied together," Dugan explains.

Further complicating things when your family owns a business is the lack of anonymity. "It's difficult when your family is a brand-name," says Dugan. "People ask, 'Does your family own...?' It carries responsibility."

"There is pressure that your name is attached to the business and family's reputation, so you must always be gracious, thoughtful and mindful of your surroundings," says Jennifer Daurora, the first of the third generation of the Pittsburgh-based McGinnis Sisters Special Food Stores to enter the family business. But at the same time, "It is great to have a safe environment to learn new skills. If I make a mistake, my aunts and mom acknowledge it and help me turn it into a learning experience, but they will still love me."

Before he attended the Junior Generations Program, Alex Stentz thought his mother was tougher on him than on other employees. "We said he had to be better," she explains. "He didn't like having to punch in and out, start at the bottom. He was surprised to find out that all the kids had to do the same thing, and then he understood."

Alex also understands another business concept now. "When he got home," his mother says, "Alex said, 'I got to network with people I'll work with some day!'"

To find out about this summer's Junior Generation Program, call the Family Enterprise Center at 412/648-1544 or visit www.familybiz.pitt.edu.

—Regina Vitti-Lyons

GOOD STUFF FOR KIDS

A Berry Good Time

Spend an afternoon on the farm and come home with a bucket of berries. This month, cherries and strawberries can be harvested, and some local farms will let you pick your own. If you and the kids don't eat them first, there are many ways to use or preserve your harvest—in pies or jams, or even simply by freezing. For tips, go to: www.PickYourOwn.org/PA.htm. Also, before heading out on your berry-picking expedition, call the farm to confirm that nature has cooperated, and that there are, indeed, berries ready to pick.

Local farms offering pick-your-own include:

- **Paskorz Berry Farm**, 36 Starr Road, West Deer; 724/265-3073.
- **The Berry Patch**, 161 Blueberry Lane, New Florence, Fairfield Township, Westmoreland County; 724/238-4714, www.ligonier.com/berrypatch.
- **Pete's Berry Farm**, 2803 Winner Road, Sharpesville Township, Mercer County; 724/962-2913.
- **Simmons Farm**, 170 Simmons Road, Peters Township, Washington County; 724/941-1490; www.summersfarm.com.

WATCH REAL COWBOYS IN ACTION

A real live rodeo, The Butler Rodeo, returns for its 27th year this month. For three days—June 16, 17 and 18—families can watch real cowboys in action. Shows start at 8 p.m. (gates open at 6 p.m.) at the Butler Farm Show Grounds, Route 68, Connonquenessing Township, three miles west of Butler. The International Professional Rodeo Association-sanctioned events include bareback bronco riding, calf roping and steer wrestling. Proceeds go to the Butler Farm Show. Tickets at the gate: adults, \$10; youth 4-12, \$4. Info: 724/865-9337, www.Butlerrodeo.com.

COOL CAMPS ON CAMPUS

Check out these great summer-camp offerings at local universities and colleges. School-age children can get a taste of college life, even if it is just a few weeks of camp. Your youngster will be glad to know there won't be final exams. Here are just a few unique camps:

- **Summer in the City at Point Park University** (201 Wood St., downtown) offers programs such as Design It! and Creative Dramatics for middle-schoolers, Criminal Justice Camp and Camp Hollywood for high-schoolers and a teen multimedia camp sponsored by WQED Multimedia. Info: 412/338-2489, www.point-park.edu/summer.
- **Chatham College** (Woodland Road, Shadyside) offers Music and Arts Summer Day Camp for completed kindergarten through completed grade eight. For students in completed grades nine to 12, the Summer Scholars Program includes interesting topics such as digital animation and a forensic science course. Info: 412/365-1148, www.chatham.edu/daycamp or www.chatham.edu/summerscholars.
- **Carnegie Mellon University** (5000 Forbes Ave., Oakland) hosts several programs including iD Tech Camps for kids 7 to 17. These week-long sessions include techie topics such as 3-D game design, programming and robotics. Info: 888/709-8324, www.internaldrive.com.

— Roberta Mintz Levine