



News release

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**Student wins business competition
for business idea tailored to autistic children**

Gateway Technical College student Beth Tyykila's entrepreneurial concept for a "sensory palace" business focused on providing a fun atmosphere tailored to the needs of autistic children won first place in the college's second annual "Shark Tank"-like competition held Nov. 20 during the celebration of Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Gateway's version of the Shark Tank mimics the TV show, in that students pitch their idea for a business or an invention to a panel of judges. Prizes were awarded to the top participants, and a free one-on-one business coaching session was available to all participants prior to the event.

"It was a great experience, several people on the panel said they like the idea and I should run with it," said Tyykila, of Racine. "It was a real encouragement to me."

Tyykila came up with the idea for the sensory palace – filled with rooms that stimulate all five of the human senses – after talking to parents of autistic children who wanted to set up a sensory room at their home but could not afford

it. The business provides a more affordable and place for autistic children to have fun and engage in activities tailored to themselves and their families.

Tyykila won a Samsung Galaxy Tab 3 as well as a trophy for her winning proposal.

Other proposal winners included:

Second place, Goeff Clay, Racine. Proposal: Cordpak, which replaces the battery pack in a cordless power tool with an adapter that allows the user to run the tool off of a standard electrical outlet. Clay won a trophy and a \$100 Gateway Workforce and Economic Development Division professional development gift certificate.

Third place, Tania Cruz, Racine. Proposal: A Christian bookstore for Racine that offers Spanish literature, apparel, costumes, movies, and much more to Spanish-speaking Christians. Cruz won a \$25 gift card to a local bookstore.

Fourth place, Mavra Papadatos, Kenosha. Proposal: Mavra's Greek Olive Oil, which imports extra virgin olive oil from Greece grown on her family's farm, a tradition they've done for more than 100 years. Papadatos won a \$25 Yardarm gift certificate.

Fifth place, Chris LaLonde, Union Grove. Proposal: Rent a Nerd, which offers mobile computer assistance with an emphasis on education for senior citizens. LaLonde won a \$25 Yardarm gift certificate.

Sixth place, Allison Viesca, Racine. Proposal: Restaurant startup that features her unique spaghetti sauce. Viesca won a \$25 Yardarm gift certificate.

For more information on the competition, please contact Kate Walker at (262) 898-7410.

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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