

Hershey Man Wins EDGE Award for Start-up Business Plan

LINCOLN, Neb. -- Wesley Easter had considered new business ideas before, but he said his project might have stayed in his mind's eye had it not been for the University of Nebraska's entrepreneur course, "Tilling the Soils of Opportunity."

Easter's Broodmare Care and Reproduction Facility plan placed first in the 2002-2003 Nebraska EDGE State Coalition Best Business Plan contest, winning a \$500 prize.

"Initially, I took the class just to set up the plan and see if it was a feasible project, but after I started I thought if I was already into it I was going to complete it," the Hershey businessman said. "As with most businesses, the potential is limited only by the desire to serve the customer."

Easter said his business, for which he is working to get financial backing, is meant to serve the large number of coastal and metropolitan horse owners as an equine breeding facility, taking brood mares and raising colts for them, performing embryo transfers and other reproductive services.

His goal, Easter said, is to have transitioned into his new business by September. The plan calls for 10 employees, and by the end of a year of business, Easter hopes to have performed 50 embryo transfers and be caring for 150 brood mares. Currently, he and his wife, Judee, own and operate Pair-A-Dice Quarter horses as a family business.

The 40-hour EDGE class offers a chance to gain valuable insights from others about general business principles to start or improve a business, Easter said. "I'd highly recommend the class," he said. "You get a chance to learn from the others' successes and failures and bounce ideas off others in the class. There is a general support amongst classmates. The instructor, Ann Helberg, and course coordinators Connie Francis and Joy Marshall were tremendous assets to the program and my completion of the business plan."

The class, which began in 1993, is offered in 10-12 communities across the state a year, said Marilyn Schlake, Nebraska EDGE program coordinator.

Business plans were judged based on their mission, organization, marketing plan, financial plan and other criteria. Other Nebraska EDGE Best Business Plan winners include:

Second place (\$300) -- Cathy Bruda, Cathy's Computer Services, Ord.

Third place (\$200) -- Britt and Jo Anderson, Anderson Farms, Gothenburg.

EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs) is offered through the University of Nebraska's Center for Applied Rural Innovation, part of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

More information, including a class schedule, is available at <http://nebraskaedge.unl.edu> or by calling (402) 472-4138.

For more information contact:

[Marilyn Schlake](#), Program Coordinator

[Center for Applied Rural Innovation](#)

58 F Filley Hall Lincoln, NE 68583-0947

1.800.328.2851 or 1.402.472.4138