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## EYD NEWSLETTER SPRING 2021 EDITION

### In this Newsletter:

**[Project Update](#) | [Marketing Tips](#) | [Interview with Partner: Dave Hanson, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\), Chicagoland Alliance for Disabled owned Businesses](#) | [Introducing new team members Vamshi and Krisha](#) | [Subscription Details](#)**

### **Project Update: Promoting Entrepreneurship Among Youth with Disabilities**

This is a program designed to educate and equip high school students with disabilities with the tools to start and maintain their own business. The program starts with a foundation to entrepreneurship, and then builds on that with lessons to develop a business plan, including topics like conducting market research and navigating the finances of a small business. The curriculum is meant to be interactive and engaging, with class activities and worksheets to inspire class discussion. After participants complete their business plan, they can make a pitch to a group of judges and get up to \$500 for equipment and/or supplies for the start-up.

Currently the program is being implemented at one of the campuses from the Youth Connection Charter School (YCCS). YCCS has 19 campuses around the city of Chicago and primarily serves at-risk students. We are piloting the curriculum this semester and are looking for additional partners for the Fall.

### **Tips for business owners**

#### **Marketing Tips**

With everything that a small business owner must do daily, one area that often gets neglected is marketing. Whether due to the time involved in pulling together a marketing campaign, to the potential costs associated with a marketing plan, it can seem like a daunting task. A good marketing plan will take some time, however the time spent can lead to more customers and more business.

One of the simplest areas to begin a marketing campaign is through social media. Creating a social media account is an effective alternative to a company website. Creating and regularly posting a blog can also draw new readers that may not have previously known about your business. Social media targeted ads can also be a cost-effective way to advertise your business as well. For instance, a marketing campaign on Facebook or Instagram can cost as little as \$1.00-2.00 for every person that clicks on your ad, and less than \$10.00 for every 1,000 impressions. If the marketing campaign is designed effectively, you can expect a great return on your investment.

Another marketing strategy that can be very effective is a word-of-mouth campaign. With the rise in review sites like Yelp, you can offer incentives such as discounts on future purchases if an existing customer writes a review. Discount codes that customers can share with friends and family that give future discounts are also a great way to incentive customers to tell their friends and family. Reviews can cut both ways however with a dissatisfied customer leaving a bad review of your business, so be careful to address any customer issues that come up quickly, so your customers walk away happy.

**Interview with Partner: Dave Hanson, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Chicagoland Alliance for Disabled owned Businesses**



**1. When did you decide to start an organization to promote entrepreneurship for people with disabilities AND why?**

The creation of the Chicagoland Alliance for Disabled Own Businesses came from my work with people with disabilities owned businesses, where I continuously heard that people with disabilities are not represented equally as other disenfranchised groups, such as women-owned and minority owned business owners.

**2. How has your experience working in Vocational Rehabilitation help you to start this organization?**

As Director of VR, we worked with a handful of entrepreneurs. I saw firsthand the benefit of a state agency supporting these business owners through the development of their business plans and start-up money.

**3. What is the status of the organization? What challenges are you facing in this process?**

At Alliance, we are currently working on the federal 501(C)(6) nonprofit exemption status, developing the website, and creating awareness among existing businesses.

**4. How do you motivate and inspire people with disabilities to start their own businesses?**

The Alliance works with both existing businesses and startups. I am working primarily with existing businesses. Regarding startups or individuals with disabilities thinking of starting their own business, I try to find an existing business owner with disabilities to be a mentor. Also, I direct these individuals to existing resources and programs for entrepreneurs with disabilities.

**Introducing our new team members**

**Vamshi Krishna Jillapally**



The EYD team is happy to welcome Vamshi Krishna Jillapally to the team. Vamshi is a graduate MIS student in the UIC - Liataud Graduate School of Business

**Krishna Martinez**



The EYD team is happy to welcome Krishna Martinez to the team. Krishna Martinez is a graduate student in the UIC College of Nursing

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**640 Roosevelt Rd #436, Chicago, IL 60608**  
**(312) 355-1396**  
[smurthy@uic.edu](mailto:smurthy@uic.edu)  
<https://eyd.ahs.uic.edu/>