A team of West Yorkshire students were named overall winners in this year’s annual Umph! business and enterprise competition, at the John Smith’s Stadium, Huddersfield, on 1 July.

The winning team, from Beckfoot School in Bingley, was made up of four year-12, A-level business studies students, Nabeel Rathoer, Chrystal Tong, Nikhil Vekaria and Jack Partington.

The Beckfoot School team beat over a hundred contestants from sixth forms and colleges across Yorkshire to scoop the award. The students used SimVenture software to run their own virtual business, gave presentations and were tested on their knowledge of business, by a panel of experts that included business advisers from organiser Grant Thornton. Specialists from co-sponsors law firm Bond Dickinson, Huddersfield University, Huddersfield Town Football Club and Fantastic Media were also on the judging panel.

During the day-long competition, the contestants received input and advice in interactive workshops from a line-up of Yorkshire entrepreneurs and inspirational speakers including Huddersfield Town chairman and Card Factory founder, Dean Hoyle; Leeds-based entrepreneur and DJ Alex Simmons; ITV studios entertainment director Siobhan Greene; and Mark Wood, polar explorer.
Winning team member, Nikhil Vekaria, said: “Everything we learned today first hand from the entrepreneurs was really valuable and gave us a different perspective on business from what we study on our A level course at school. The main messages seemed to be that it is really important to do something that you enjoy and are passionate about, and also that it’s ok to fail and to make mistakes sometimes - that’s part of the journey towards achieving success.”

Nabeel Rathore added: “It’s great to know that you can be really successful and run a really good business without it being a name that everyone’s heard of. There are loads of good businesses out there doing exciting stuff and for us, having the chance to meet the people who run some of them, is inspirational.”

Sandra O’Neill, Umph! organiser and head of business development at Grant Thornton, said: “The students from Beckfoot School were brimming with enthusiasm for business and it’s great to see how much all the young people who took part in the competition gained from this practical experience of real life business and entrepreneurialism.”

She added: “It’s vital that more youngsters get the opportunity to have this sort of hands-on interaction with real business people so they can understand what entrepreneurialism means and what businesses are looking for. Commercial skills and innovative thinking are vital to the economy of the future and we need to nurture them in today’s young people. The day also produced mentors from the entrepeneurs and offers of real hands on work experience which is fantastic.”

The competition is part of Grant Thornton’s Educate to Innovate programme, which is taking the lead in encouraging entrepreneurialism and bringing together business and education in Yorkshire.

For more information on Umph! Go to www.umph.uk.com.

Ends

Photography:

1. Umph! winning team, left-right Nabeel Rathoer, Chrystal Tong, Nikhil Vekaria, Jack Partington

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