

## Bethany Network Ventures gives students

# Hands-on learning

## Organization gives students taste of future careers

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On the second floor of a cute little white house on Marsh Street, some serious business is going down.

Bethany Lutheran College students involved in the creation of a new student organization, Bethany Network Ventures, have an office there.

With a professional conference table, an easel for presentations, a white board to jot down ideas, they have everything needed for hours- long meetings to hash out business plans. And soon, they'll be ready to hit the ground running, connecting Mankato's business community to Bethany students in departments campuswide. The office is in the Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation, formerly the Riverbend Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation, which recently moved to the Bethanyowned house on Marsh Street that used to house college visitors.

Shane Bowyer, a professor of business, is on the board of directors for the center, which is county and state funded and aims to help small businesses get off the ground. Frozen Yogurt Creations is just one example of a Mankato company the center helped to create a business plan.

The idea came about last year to move the center and its two fulltime employees, Jon Herzog and Executive Director Bryan Stading, to the Bethany campus to involve students in various aspects of operations. The details are still being ironed out, but student involvement will probably be through internships, including one being done by Kelsey Hoyord, a communications student, who will be holding an overnight entrepreneurial camp for kids next summer.

Already last fall, however, a marketing class worked on a project that outlined a vision for the future of the center. A graphic design class created a new logo. An events planning class held an open house, handling everything from the invitations to the food. And a business communications class is handling the center's newsletter.

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Photos by John Cross

From left, Bethany students Staci Paul, Zak Fick and Denaye Austad discuss the new student organization Bethany

Network Ventures.



The Riverbend Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation, now the Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation, moved to Marsh Street near the Bethany campus and will involve students in various aspects of its operation.

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"Being able to tie in classes like that worked out great," Bowyer said.

The center also houses Bethany Network Ventures, which will become paid business opportunities for students. If a company in the Mankato area needs a new logo designed, for example, Bethany Network Ventures would act as a liaison to connect the company with graphic design students who would be paid for their work.

"Our goal in all of this is for our students to not have to work retail so they can put their talents to use on campus," Bowyer said.

A grant has provided start-up money for the organization, and future funding will come in part through students bidding on jobs. Junior Staci Paul, a business major involved in starting Network Ventures, said the experience for students to put what they've learned in the classroom to real-world jobs is invaluable. "If anything, it'll just give us more insight into what we want to do (in our careers)," said Denaye Austad, a business major.

"We're all really excited about it."

Sophomore Zak Fick, a business finance major, said he hopes the organization will grow to be able to facilitate a number of projects at once.

"Entrepreneurialism is basically the start of something new," Fick said. "We have the opportunity to be involved in the growth stage and start this thing."