

# Networking success crosses generations

**As reported by  
Gail Boehm of the  
Juneau County Star-Times**



Local ties have been instrumental in celebrating success for a college student who has his own business.

Kris Yager, outreach coordinator for the Juneau County Economic Development Corp (JCEDC), and member of the Inventors and Entrepreneurs Club (I&E) said, "The Wisconsin Department of Commerce requested nominations and JCEDC nominated Andrew Napier. "He will be on the Neil Heinen Show "For the Record," to be aired on Channel 3, CBS, Madison Sunday, March 2, at 10 a.m."

Yager said that Napier, of Mauston, was selected by the Department of Commerce as one of two college students for his entrepreneurial spirit.

Napier said being nominated by Kris Yager and Terry Whipple and being chosen by the Department of Commerce has been a great honor. Napier said he is excited to meet another college entrepreneur from UW-Stevens Point.

## ► About Napier

Napier's business, Napier Films LLC, began when he was 11-years-old. During a conference call from JCEDC, Napier said, "My dad is very artistic and bought a Macintosh computer with video editing material on it. I started small action films and then a documentary on Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin fourth grade." Napier said he won top honors for the Heritage Fair. He then ran his business combined with filming documentaries such as weddings, birthdays and slide shows. He said he never advertised, it was all "word of mouth." Since then he has filmed 250 events and documentaries.

He added he learned a lot from making mistakes. Napier said, "When I was 14, I taped a wedding for some friends and found the microphone was not working during the saying of the vows." He said it was a frustrating time as he had wanted to do a really good job on it. Napier said his parents have always helped him through things like that. He said they always wanted him to do his best but were but were not critical of him. Napier said he learned to always have a backup when filming.

One of the big impetus of his career of filming documentaries was when Napier was a student in Mauston High School and was approached by a Mauston Olson Middle School teacher, Margie Hylkema and Chloris Lowe, former leader of the Ho-Chunk Nation, about a project located in his hometown of Mauston. Napier said he made a documentary "Keeping the Spirit" about finding and restoring a Native American Panther Spirit Mound. He said the documentary helped unite people to protect the over 1,000 year-old sacred burial ground discovered in Mauston. Napier said the documentary archived the history of how the mound was located, how students, the community, the state and Juneau County Historical society, archeologists and the Ho-Chunk Native Americans helped preserve the site.

For more about the Spirit Mound go to [pantherspiritmound.com](http://pantherspiritmound.com).

Napier, who is a freshman at UW-Madison, said he has a documentary in process. He said, "I am working on a documentary about a woman, 89, who competes in triathlons and a man, 81, who set the national high jump record in his age category."

His goal is to inspire people to become more active regardless of their age. Napier added that he has been filming the project for two years and will edit the 200 hours of footage into a one hour documentary.

#### Struggles and rewards

Napier regretted he had not found the local I&E Club sooner. He said, "None of this would have been possible without the I&E Club." He said Sue Noble had contacted him about starting the youth group with a grant.

Napier said, "When I was heading up the Youth I&E Club, I could see myself in them." He added he could have used the help when he first started his business at a much younger age. He said it was great to see the youth interested in inventing and starting their own businesses. He said the I&E Club, based in Camp Douglas at the JCEDC building has been beneficial to his success. He said, "Once I discovered the I&E Club, I found what an asset it was!"

He added, "Thanks for the support from my parents, from the club and wonderful Juneau County. I would not be able to do what I do today without them."

#### Networking is key

Whipple agreed that most inventors need moral support along with resources to connect with others to become successful. He said, "There are so many talented people in different areas. The networking throughout the nation and, sometimes, the world is the important part." He said through the Juneau County I&E club an inventor from this area had an idea for a garment and a designer in New York responded to her email with a solution for production of the item. Whipple said the network of the 50 I&E Clubs in the state help each other out. He added the largest increase in inventions comes when the economy is in a down turn.

#### Starting them young

Whipple said the younger the people are when they have ideas about inventions, the better chance they have of pursuing their passions. He said the club has connected with schools in Monroe, Juneau and Vernon counties.

Whipple has been giving presentations to third grade students. He said, "They don't only think outside the box, they don't know there is a box." He said it is important for students to learn they can succeed in their own businesses with the right connections and plans. He said they can follow their passion. Whipple said the students questioned solutions for global warming. He said, "Right now we have nine companies working on alternative fuel."

Yager said the Juneau County and Vernon/Crawford County I&E clubs are supporting the Mississippi Valley Gifted/Talented network, Southern Region invention fairs. Yager said they have been encouraging students' inventions by speaking to their classes and judging their fairs. She said teachers have been most cooperative including Wendy Horbinski, a Necedah teacher, who had been on the I&E Club board. The final event is being held in Cashton Feb. 26 when Bob Harter, patent agent and inventor will talk about the process of inventing, getting a patent and selling of inventions.