

SVC Winners Go a Step Further

For the fifth consecutive year, the ESR Center has hosted the Social Venture Competition (SVC). This competition allows students to share their interest in local, national, and global social issues by creating business plans with a social mission. Aaron Miller, faculty member and director of the competition, stated, “BYU is recognized as one of the more entrepreneurial campuses in the country, and this, coupled with the student body’s strong commitment to give aid around the world, results in the students’ proactive and innovative approaches to addressing social problems right away.”

Last year’s winner was S4: Students for Self-Sustainable Schools. Their plan consisted of building a hotel in the Kancheepuram district of India in order to raise and maintain funds to support a charitable school associated with a leprosy colony. The hotel would also provide an opportunity for older students to work and develop various skills in order to break the cycle of poverty. S4 won a total of US\$25,000 in cash to help fund its project. Second place was awarded to School Tipline, an online tool that allows students to anonymously report bullying and threats. The third place award went to Next Deseret, an organization that helps finance nonprofit surgical centers in developing countries. This year, in addition to the funds that were awarded, each finalist team has the opportunity to earn additional support funds from the ESR Center by meeting outlined objectives by March 2009.

During this past summer, each team has worked diligently to receive the additional funding. Two of the teams have had the opportunity to go their respective



Indian school children benefit from lectures given by local Tamil teachers as well as one-on-one English tutoring sessions offered by volunteers.

developing countries to start their business ventures. S4 partnered with Rising Star Outreach of India and was able to research the development of their initial phases of the project and gain hands-on experience in understanding how to implement their social business plan. Next Deseret was able to partner with Deseret International and travel to Peru to begin the initial phases of their plan.

Although the excitement of starting new ventures and monetary awards are used as incentives to encourage students to plan and carry out their innovative ideas, those who participate in the competition learn lifelong lessons and gain invaluable experience. Brian Hill, an S4 team member, commented how his experience “provided global perspective and understanding in how not only to enable the people in developing countries but also to impact the entire economic system.”

As the competition has evolved, the number of submissions has increased, but most importantly, the quality of the proposals has been exceptional. “Our goal this coming year is to penetrate as many disciplines as we can and have more involvement from faculty members,” adds Miller. “This is an opportunity for students and faculty to have a mentorship experience and for everyone to learn what social entrepreneurship is.” [ESR](#)