Campfire idea sparks teen entrepreneurs to launch new business in just 9 months

By [Jasen Lee](http://www.deseretnews.com/author/21634/Jasen-Lee.html), Deseret News

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Tanner Harrison demonstrates how to use a Wolf 'em Stick, a product he and his brother Spencer are making and selling that is used to cook tasty treats over a campfire, in South Jordan on Saturday, June 29, 2013.

Kristin Murphy, Deseret News

Summary

Two South Jordan teens made their entrepreneurial debut in June when they put their unique new product on sale for the very first time.

“They did not want to work at McDonald’s in high school. They wanted to be able to use their creativity and brains to develop something that was going to make money, be useful and be something that they could be proud of.”

Julie Harrison

SOUTH JORDAN — Many teenagers have roasted snacks around the campfire, but few have been smart and innovative enough to make a business out of it.

Two South Jordan teens made their entrepreneurial debut earlier this month when they put their recently created product on sale for the very first time.

Spencer and Tanner Harrison have always been creative boys, according to their mother, Julie Harrison. So it didn’t surprise her or her husband, Roger, when the two brothers excelled in a program sponsored by the South Jordan Chamber of Commerce that was aimed at developing interest in building a small business.

“They did not want to work at McDonald’s in high school,” she said. “They wanted to be able to use their creativity and brains to develop something that was going to make money, be useful and be something that they could be proud of.”

Last fall, Spencer, 13, and Tanner, 16, enrolled in a class through the Young Entrepreneurs Association. During the weekly, after-school class, they were asked to come up with a product and develop a business plan.

The motto is, "Start as a student, end as the CEO of your own company," explained Lori LeBeau, chairwoman of the South Jordan Chamber of Commerce and organizer of the YEA Utah entrepreneur program.

In April, the boys won first place in the state for their business idea and were able to compete in New York at the national competition for the Young Entrepreneurs Association.

In New York, the pair took second place with their business presentation — each winning a $24,000 scholarship and a trip to Washington, D.C., to the Small Business Summit where they were able to meet with publishing magnate Steve Forbes, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Tom Donahoe, as well as Damon John and Barbara Corcoran from the television show “Shark Tank.”

When they initially enrolled in the program, Tanner Harrison said they only expected to learn what entrepreneurs do, but instead they learned all the steps necessary to start their own business.

“At the beginning, we weren’t really sure what we wanted to do (for our business),” he said. After initially working separately, the brothers decided to work collaboratively to develop their product.

“Our parents have been very supportive,” he said. “It’s been a process, but as time went on, it has developed into a better and better product.”

Having put in 12 hours a day for many months on creating their business, Spencer Harrison said they are excited and truly prepared to finally get things up and running.

“Because we put so much work in, we’re ready for (the business to launch),” he explained.

Since returning from New York, the boys have found suppliers to provide materials for their product, signed a contract with a fulfillment service to ship their product, launched their website, obtained a patent, filed for a trademark, in addition to obtaining business and tax licenses.

“Spencer and Tanner have basically launched a fully functioning business while continuing to getting straight A's in school — in six weeks,” their father, Roger Harrison, said.

They launched their new business — Campfire Industries — and product, the Wolf 'Em Stick, at Country Fest in South Jordan.

The Wolf 'Em Stick is a tool like those used for roasting treats like s'mores or marshmallows, with a 2-inch wood dowel on one end and two handholds that allow the user to rotate the treat on the other end — over a campfire or backyard fire.

“You take biscuit dough, form it over the wooden dowel and cook it over a fire for about three minutes,” explained Julie Harrison. “When you pull it off, it forms a cup that you fill with pudding or pie filling, then slather it with whipped cream and you wolf it down.”

She said people could create their own treats using chocolate, strawberries or any other favorite snack or food ingredients. The idea was conceived after a visit to a relative’s home where coat hangers were used to roast snacks on.

The boys set up a booth at the recent event and demonstrated their product to hundreds of interested customers. Over one weekend, they sold 250 Wolf 'Em Sticks.

"One of every three people who made one, bought a stick," Julie Harrsion said. "It was very, very well-received."

They hope the new product — which sold for $13 apiece or two for $20 — will be a hit at Scout camps, family camping trips or just with friends enjoying a fire in the backyard. Currently, the product is sold at one retail location — Motor Sportsland, an RV dealership in Salt Lake City. Salespeople at the store show customers how the product is used, which draws more interest, she noted.

The company hopes to expand sales into Canada and Mexico by next year, she said.

Tanner Harrison said he was surprised by the success he and his brother have had thus far — just a few months after enrolling in a local entrepreneur program.

“Thinking back, it’s amazing to see what we have developed,” he said. “It’s exceeded my expectations.”