Entrepreneurs

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walked away with a $500 scholarship. But even those who didn’t win a prize felt the day was well spent.

“Everybody worked together, getting to explain ideas, collaborating and not slating anybody down,” said Delta Charter School junior Pedro Aquirre, 17. “I’ll do it again.”

Aquirre worked with a group that wanted to set up a nonprofit that would provide housing, counseling services and educational opportunities to homeless youth.

While most of the groups went the nonprofit route, the team that developed Blankets was inspired by Tom’s, a company that gives away a pair of shoes for every one it sells.

Jonathan Gonzalez, a 16-year-old Watsonville High School junior, said Blankets would do the same thing with its product to help the homeless.

If students are serious about making their concepts realistic, Brenda Zeller, coordinator of the Youth Entrepreneurship Program at the Small Business Development Center at Cabrillo College, said her program, could help refine business plans and obtain financing.

The Healthy Heart team is ready to go. Members want to establish a once-monthly farmers market at Callaghan Park that would offer organic produce and children’s activities to attract families. The concept took second place.

“We have a 40 percent obesity rate in Watsonville,” said Watsonville High School junior Kaylee Ortiz, 16. “That’s not good.”

Danny Keith, founder and chief executive officer of Grind Out Hunger, a nonprofit working to ensure Santa Cruz County children have enough to eat, was the keynote speaker.

Keith, who spoke about marketing strategies and the importance of communication, told students they had the power to make a difference.

“First and foremost, talk about it, own that problem,” he said. “An issue has its course. You can change that course if you make it your problem.”

SUCCESS CENTER

What: Winning project at Junior Achievement Social Innovation Conference would raise college awareness and help students be ready to take advantage of educational opportunities.


Price: $500 scholarship for each team member.

Event sponsors: Junior Achievement and PG&E.