

## Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour encourages young adults to start businesses

By KEITH ROZENDAL

Posted: 10/28/2010 01:30:12 AM PDT

WATSONVILLE -- Sergio Rocha owns Click-In Computers, a growing electronics service provider he started in 2005 at the age of 20.

The workforce investment boards of Santa Cruz and Monterey counties brought the Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour to the fairgrounds in Watsonville on Wednesday in hopes that young people will follow Rocha's example.

The event was meant to show local youth that they can head their own small business as an alternative to seeking employment. According to speakers and organizers at the event, all it takes is the right idea combined with free, local resources and support.

"We started thinking about the poor jobs market and thought, Rather than finding jobs for people, let's create people who can create jobs," said Loyanne Flinn de Guaracha, acting executive director of the Monterey County Workforce Investment Board.

The Extreme Entrepreneurship Tour, sponsored by the US Chamber of Commerce, holds 50 youth-oriented events a year featuring energetic

presentations by successful under-30 entrepreneurs.

The speakers strive to motivate young adults to create business ideas centered on their passions and then to identify local programs and resources that can help make the business a reality.

"We want to light that fire and give them the push to these programs," said Michael Simmons, who founded Princeton WebSolutions at 16 and is a co-founder of the tour.

"There are a lot of amazing opportunities just in this

area," said Flinn, citing the work of Marina Technology Cluster, Cabrillo College's Small Business Development Center and ALBA, which supports small scale organic agriculture businesses.

El Pajaro Community Development Corp., a Watsonville retail business incubator, exhibited at the event in hopes of attracting startups to Plaza Vigil, a commercial building the group operates on Beach Street. It also provide business plan assistance, marketing and training support and small loans to local retail businesses -- all in Spanish and English and all for free.

Amy Mascarenas, who represented El Pajaro at the event, said, "Graduation, for us, is when your business needs to expand to a larger location."

Rocha of Watsonville is one of El Pajaro's

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successes. He founded Click-In after completing a 12-week business-education program. The business expanded once within Plaza Vigil, and Rocha expanded again early this year, relocating to East Lake Avenue. He currently employs four people other than himself.

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