

# Seventh grader combines hobby and talent to create profitable business

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Shelby Kittle likes to fish, and she likes to paint. The 7<sup>th</sup> grader turned her interests into a profitable venture at this year's Entrepreneurship Investigation (ESI) camp in Valley County earlier this summer.

She and about 20 other youngsters spent four days learning the basics about product development, marketing and running your own business.

Shelby's product is hand-painted

fishing lures. She's had some past experience creating her product. She says her parents are her "field testers" and her lures really work.

During the ESI camp, the kids broke into small groups and visited area entrepreneurs to find out about real-life business ownership. They also learned about promoting their product.

"I learned how to use a Microsoft program (Publisher) to make flyers. That was really great. It's so easy," said Shelby.

Campers also had to speak directly to local bankers to secure seed money to buy supplies for their creations.

"They were so nice," Shelby said. "One thing they told me was I should up my price. So I decided to charge \$3.50 for each lure. We each got an envelope for the money and the receipts, because we had to pay back the bank."

Shelby's favorite part of the camp was the final day's product fair on the courthouse square. Each camper displayed and sold their products to the public.

Was it tough to make the sale?

"Not really. I told them about the 43 ½-inch muskie, and the 13-inch perch and the 33-inch pike we caught. And that seemed to work."

By the way, this is no fish story. Shelby knows how to troll. Her family hunts and fishes a lot and eats most of what they kill or catch.

Shelby's lures are beautiful; it's no wonder the fish are attracted! "Some of them, though, are kind of just for fun. Like I have some Big Red ones and some red, white and blue patriotic ones."

At the end of the day, Shelby had done pretty well. After paying back the bank her \$10 loan she had a profit of about \$100.

Shelby was careful to include her calling card with each sale she made. "One day I came home and some lady had come back with my card and my mom had sold her all of my deep divers!"

Camp organizers are giving the young entrepreneurs an opportunity to sell at the Farmers Market and the County Fair, and to even join the Chamber of Commerce at a reduced youth membership rate of \$25. That enables them to promote their products online.

The County Fair is Shelby's next stop. Then on to the State Fair. Asked if she might consider owning her own business when she grows up, she sounds surprised. "Oh. Yes! I've always planned on having my own business. My first one was selling worms. I'm not sure what the business would be. I'll probably stay pretty close to home. It depends. If I start a paint-less dent removal business like my mom's, I might have to move."

When Shelby starts 7<sup>th</sup> grade this fall, she'll be going to junior high in Ord. It will be a big change for her. She spent her elementary school years in Elyria with just eight students in her whole school. Kids with an entrepreneurial spirit like Shelby's usually find a way to make things work out.

"Most of the kids at the (ESI) camp were my age, so that was nice. I got to know them before starting school."

The ESI camp was free to participants and was made possible through grants from the Valley County Community Foundation Fund (VCCFF), Hometown Competitiveness Endowment, and the Wozab Memorial Fund, which are affiliated funds of the Nebraska Community Foundation.

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