

FIRED UP

Budding entrepreneurs line up Monday at OK College to pitch their ideas to Dragons' Den



SAMUEL DOBRIN/The Daily Courier

Martine Theriault, left, presents her innovation, the Swim Pal, to Dragons' Den producers at Okanagan College in Kelowna on Monday.

Valley figures prominently in Dragons' Den

By J.P. SQUIRE
The Daily Courier

The Okanagan provides a constant source of business inspiration to the popular CBC-TV show Dragons' Den. Penticton will be featured in the final show of the current season on Wednesday. Meanwhile, producers were in Kelowna on Monday looking for more inventive ideas to put before its panel of wealthy Canadian moguls next fall.

"The final show of our fifth season is a completely different show than we've ever done before. It's totally outside of the den. We go back and look at how they all became dragons, the unique paths that they took, so it's called The Road to Riches," said

Molly Duignan, one of three producers in Kelowna on Monday.

Jim Treliving, the Boston Pizza magnate and a Dragons' Den host, discovered the pizza restaurant in Edmonton and opened his second location in Penticton, she said.

"Now, there's at least 320 locations in Canada. It's a really cool episode."

Dragons' Den had another success story with Trent Kitsch of Kelowna, who pitched Saxx underwear and is now selling three lines of the body hugging attire around the world.

"We've got a range of everything here today," said Duignan.

"You'd think we'd seen it all after five years. But I have to say, I never ceased to be amazed by the innovation we've seen, everything from do-



SAMUEL DOBRIN/The Daily Courier

Martine Theriault poses with the Swim Pal at Dragons' Den auditions on Monday.

it-yourself home reno equipment to a sensual, erotic franchise (Wild Kingdom) to a new pizza franchise."

Producers also saw equipment to assist seniors and health-care pitch-

es among the 50-plus people who want to appear on season six next fall.

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Dragons' Den

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"Kelowna has always been a great spot for us. I've been here every year that I've been involved in the show, four years. Each year, we get more people and better businesses," said Duignan.

Producers will visit more than 40 cities and then cull the submissions down to the 300 "best, brightest and most innovative" presentations.

Those will face the dragons in a concentrated filming schedule over 19 days in Toronto.

No one entering knows who will make it to the televised version and possibly receive the investment they need from the moguls to make their product successful.

Martine Theriault of Kamloops showed her Pool Pal invention to the producers in Kelowna after receiving her first model on Friday.

The Pool Pal attaches to the side of an outdoor above-ground pool. A braided line extends from the Pool Pal to a waist band so a swimmer can practice strokes while tethered in the middle of the pool.

Theriault used a belt and old rope attached to a post when she came up with the idea in 2006.

The Pool Pal locks in place on round, oval or square rigid pool sides. So far, her investment is only \$200.

"They said, 'Good job,' but she said there's not much to talk about because I have no sales so far," Theriault said.

"It was a good experience. I thought I would be more nervous, but I know my product. It was pretty simple, quite straight forward."

The auditions were hosted by Okanagan College.

As an extra incentive this year, entrepreneurs with an eco-friendly business, invention or idea could qualify for a \$100,000 Greenvention prize from Sun Chips.

Dragons' Den airs on CBC TV on Wednesdays at 8 p.m.

Full episodes and web extras can be viewed on the Dragons' Den website at www.cbc.ca/dragonsden.