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Student forms art business with twin brother

By **Rebecca Wyatt Thomas**, OU Web Writer

Twin brothers Alonzo and Brennon Edwards couldn't be more different—they look different, and they are exploring two different career paths at two different universities. Now they have found a way to come back together, uniting over their different passions. Alonzo, a student at the College for Creative Studies, and Brennon, an OU student in the School of Business Administration, have created Fraternal Easels, a business that will distribute Alonzo's artwork with Brennon running the business side of things.

"I had been waiting for him to approach me about getting into business together for a while," Brennon said. "We've always gotten along and worked together really well."

Nearly a year and a half ago, the brothers decided they would team up to distribute artwork. Brennon said they began to receive orders for artwork and they decided to slow things down and put their education first.

"Not too many people do well the first time they start a business. I really want my first venture to be successful. We are going to wait until we graduate to get into production, marketing and sales," Brennon said, adding he and his brother both plan to graduate in May 2009. However, they aren't wasting anytime preparing for that day.

Each of the Edwards brothers are working on a business plan and trying to gain experience that will help the business to be successful.

Alonzo, according to Brennon, has always liked to draw and paint. Besides taking classes at CCS toward an illustration degree, Brennon said his brother hopes to study abroad in Italy next fall.

Brennon is using his experience at Oakland University to give him the tools he needs to help Fraternal Easels become a success.

"I tailor all the knowledge I'm gaining to my business. I have been encouraged by other students and my professors more than I could have ever dreamed I would be," Brennon said. "The professors here are so helpful and they want to see students succeed."

Through OU, Brennon has been able to explore resources that will help him in the future, such as OU INCubator, and also participate in classes and student organizations that will help him develop into a business leader. Brennon currently serves as the president of OU's Students in Free Enterprise and participates in the activities of the entrepreneurship minor, which includes visiting business resources and discussing real-life scenarios with those in the business world.

"Oakland will definitely be a resource for me as I grow this business," Brennon said.

While they are getting support through their education, Brennon and Alonzo also fund support in their family.

"Both of our parents have been so supportive. They are really proud of us already. I couldn't ask for better parents. I feel like my parents are why my brother and I are where we are," Brennon said.

The brothers have decided that will be marketing Biblical pieces. Many of the artwork found in African-American churches isn't representative of the congregation with many depicting white figures. The Edwards brothers have found many churches that are interested in purchasing this type of artwork. They plan to travel around the country selling the work and getting Fraternal Easels' name out there.

Brennon said eventually they may open an art gallery, but in the beginning the focus will be on distribution from a warehouse.

"I would love to devote more time to the business. As soon as I graduate, the whole focus will be on the business," Brennon said.

Brennon will soon start an internship at Walgreens, an opportunity he obtained through SIFE. He hopes to save money to put back into the business. He said he will continue to work in the future to support himself and possibly his brother as well as the business.

SUMMARY

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