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SIFE team has best-ever finish at nationals

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Oakland University's **Students in Free Enterprise** (SIFE) team was named first runner-up in the semi-finals at this year's **SIFE USA National Exposition and Career Opportunity Fair** May 23-25 in Kansas City, Mo. The Oakland team won \$4,000 in prize money, which will be used to support continuing programs in the community aimed at teaching business principles to underprivileged youth. Oakland's placement is the highest ever for the 3-year-old organization.

"Our members are very excited about the result," said junior MIS major and OU SIFE President Jitesh Singh. "In their initial feedback, the judges noted how focused our team is on our mission and values. They were also really impressed by how much we've changed the lives of the kids we work with."

OU's team advanced to the semi-finals, where they appeared unstoppable until they competed against the team who had won the world championship two of the last three years. As first runner-ups in the semi finals, OU advanced further than all but four out of 850 SIFE teams in the nation.

At the competition, the OU team presented the components and results of their programs aimed at helping economically disadvantaged middle and high school students develop entrepreneurial skills. A series of judges evaluated teams based on how creative, innovative and effective they were in teaching students such concepts as how free markets work in a global economy and how to practice business in an ethical and socially responsible manner that supports the principles of a market economy. Judges also evaluated the effectiveness of each team at tasks such as measuring the results of their projects and how well they communicated their programs through their written reports and verbal presentations.

"Our main focus is on communities such as Pontiac and Detroit," Singh said. "We want to teach the kids how to become entrepreneurs and run their own businesses so they can be self-supporting adults. We put on cool workshops for them in which we teach concepts such as business ethics, personal skills and social responsibility."

"We don't do it for money, but for the kids. It gives you a great feeling to see them excited about what they're learning."

OU SIFE volunteers have conducted more than 125 workshops, clinics and camps to reach and teach teens in local area schools such as Detroit, Pontiac and Ferndale, as well as teaming with their international counterparts to develop programs for teens in India. The team receives support from the Comerica Foundation and GMAC.

Oakland advanced to the nationals after winning the SIFE USA Regional Competition in Cleveland, Ohio.

"I'm thrilled at our result at nationals," said OU SIFE operations director and faculty adviser Mike Callahan. "We're doing some great work in the community and this was very evident in their presentations at the competition. I'm very proud to be involved with them."

The nine-person presentation team and executive members consist of Singh (junior, MIS), Sarah Ivan (junior, elementary education), Krithika Deepa (graduating senior, computer science/MIS), Andrew Fincher (junior, marketing), Amy Boughner (junior, accounting), Ryan Strausbaugh (junior, Spanish and marketing), Andrew Lee (senior, MIS and psychology), Zarak Khan (junior, marketing) and Leah Dulaney (marketing and MIS).

Founded in 1975, SIFE is a nonprofit organization comprised of highly dedicated student teams on more than 1,400 university campuses in 33 countries. SIFE offers students the opportunity to develop leadership, teamwork and communication skills through learning, practicing and teaching the principles of free enterprise, thereby improving the standard of living for millions in the process.

Guided by distinguished faculty advisers and supported by businesses around the globe, SIFE teams teach important concepts through educational outreach projects, including market economics, entrepreneurship, personal and financial success, and business ethics to better themselves, their communities and their countries. Each year, SIFE competitions are held worldwide, drawing together thousands of students and business leaders. Although Oakland University's SIFE team is housed in the **School of Business Administration**, students from all disciplines are welcome to participate.

For more information, visit the **OU SIFE** Web site or contact Jitesh Singh at (248) 703-4984 or entrep@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

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