

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Songen takes first place in Innovation Challenge competition at UW-River Falls

March 9, 2018 – Songen, a business concept that’s the brainchild of a team of University of Wisconsin-River Falls students, took first place in Thursday’s annual Innovation Challenge, coordinated by the university’s Center for Innovation and Business Development (CIBD).

Songen is a new product designed to deal with adult incontinence, addressing the issues of leakage, ease of use and preservation of dignity. When complete, the product will be offered directly to group homes and assisted living care facilities.

“One of the team members has a grandmother who struggles with incontinence,” said CIBD Director Danielle Campeau. “In their research with group homes and nursing homes, the students discovered there were issues with existing adult briefs which were pervasive across the industry.”

Songen, the brainchild of business administration major Reid Wilson, marketing communications major Miles Peterson and field biology and chemistry major Forrest Close, is now eligible to compete in the Wisconsin Big Idea Tournament Saturday, April 21, at the Discovery Center in Madison. The Big Idea Tournament is hosted by the WiSys Technology Foundation.

Two other student teams took part in the competition which helps showcase the university’s commitment to innovation.

Generation of Donation, presented by business administration major Bryce Sanders and accounting major Ryan Lefto, is a phone app making it easier to donate small amounts of money to worthy non-profit causes. Coffee Run, presented by business administration and economics major James VandenBergh, aims to increase physical fitness levels by offering coffee coupons to customers in exchange for evidence of verified physical activity.

Twenty outside partners acted as judges for the event, which utilized the Lean Startup Methodology. Students develop ideas into viable business models and present them to judges. Successful teams are rewarded for creating a hypothesis, testing their assumptions with potential customers and modifying their business ideas through the feedback they receive.

“The competition was a great success,” Campeau said. “All three teams had to put a lot of hours into the process, and it’s not an easy one. Each team had to get out of their buildings and comfort zones and interview at least 100 people about their idea. They were all motivated and passionate and overcame some fear barriers along the way as well.”

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Photo: Songen team members Forrest Close, Reid Wilson and Miles Peterson present their business idea and process for improving the lives of incontinent individuals with an improved adult brief to area business leaders during the 2018 Innovation Challenge held in the University Center March 8. Songen took first place in the tournament. Photo by Kathy M Helgeson/UW-River Falls.