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The Huntsman Post, February 2015

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THE HUNTSMAN POST

FEBRUARY 2015 ISSUE
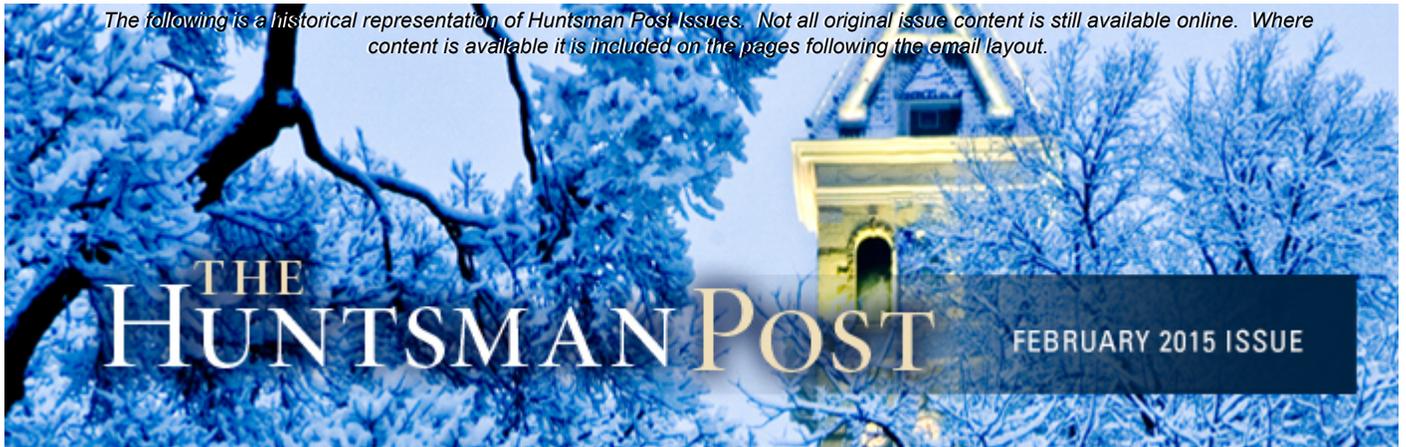
The fourth annual Entrepreneur Lecture Series from our Clark Center for Entrepreneurship kicked off last month in unseasonally warm Cache Valley. This fantastic speaker series brings entrepreneurs from a wide variety of fields to our campus. Davis Smith, founder and CEO of social entrepreneurial venture Cotopaxi, spoke to our students just last week, and his entrepreneurial mindset is something we encourage all of our students to internalize.

Huntsman professor Kristal Ray showed great ethical leadership by volunteering to teach 100 third- and fifth-grade students basic computer coding as part of the international "Hour of Code" event. Her belief of "programmers of tomorrow are the wizards of the future" is driving our students to master the skills they need for future success.

Our February video highlights our business honors program, Huntsman Scholars. We are so proud of what these students do for our community, the state, the nation and the world.

With warm regards,

DOUGLAS D. ANDERSON
DEAN & JON M. HUNTSMAN CHAIR

DAVIS SMITH, FOUNDER OF COTOPAXI

"HOUR OF CODE"

0:09 / 0:16

JON M. HUNTSMAN SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
Utah State University

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Entrepreneur Lecture Series: Davis Smith, Founder of Cotopaxi

A Company with Heart

By Ashley Brasseaux

After graduating with his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University, Davis Smith and his wife decided to take an unpaid internship in Peru. While in Cusco, they met many locals who played barefoot in the city center. One in particular named Edgar, insisted on shining Davis's tennis shoes with his shoe shining kit to earn money. Davis, intrigued by little Edgar's persistence, allowed the little boy to shine his shoes. The day before Davis and his wife left Cusco, they found Edgar crying in despair. When asked, Edgar explained that his shoe shining kit had been stolen the night before. Davis gave Edgar the little money he had in his pocket, and the next morning as Davis and his wife were leaving, he saw that Edgar had bought a big bag of candy that he was now selling individually to the other children in the street. Davis felt compassion towards the rough circumstances these children faced and knew he would be back one day to help them.

Davis's first business was pooltables.com, a business he started by selling pool tables from his aunt's basement. As the business grew he eventually opened a store and grew the business, but after six years he sold the company and decided to go back to school.

Davis earned his MBA at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and soon after, started his second venture, baby.com.br, a baby company in Brazil. The business was a huge success, becoming a $100 million company within the first 18 months. However, despite his success, Davis knew he needed to do something more.

Davis returned to Cusco in hopes of finding out what had happened to Edgar. Miraculously Edgar was found and even remembered Davis as the one who had given him money to buy his candy. It was a happy reunion, but Davis soon realized that Edgar's life had not improved in his absence. Edgar's parents had both died or abandoned him and his two younger siblings, and Edgar had constructed the makeshift mud home they now lived in. Touched by the lengths that Edgar had gone to take care of his family, Davis knew that his new business venture, Cotopaxi, could help other street children like Edgar from having to grow up in such circumstances.

Davis moved his family back to the states from Brazil in November 2013 and launched Cotopaxi in April 2014. Cotopaxi's slogan, Gear for Good, encompasses the company's values and mission. Each backpack, jacket, water bottle, or product that is sold, gives back to a humanitarian cause. For example, every Cusco backpack that is purchased helps educate a child in Peru for one week. Cotopaxi's unique business model of selling their products online without a brick and mortar location, allows Cotopaxi to cut retailer costs and donate the additional revenue to their humanitarian causes.

Based out of Salt Lake City, Cotopaxi is now a thriving businesses that encourages people to give back and be adventurous. The Questival events that are held in different cities across the U.S. encourage communities to get involved in community service while doing fun adventures such as sleeping under the stars to earn points for Cotopaxi gear. Cotopaxi has a mission to give back to humanity through their social causes while inspiring others that their efforts can make a difference.

Watch Davis Smith's presentation here.

Preparing Students for Jobs of Tomorrow

As part the international "Hour of Code" event, USU Southwest Huntsman School of Business professor Kristal Ray led a basic computer coding class for 100 third- and fifth-grade students at Manti Elementary in Manti, Utah. Combining her computer science background with business and marketing expertise, Professor Ray taught students the importance of technology in our adapting world.

"The programmers of tomorrow are the wizards of the future. Computer programming is an incredibly empowering skill to learn. It lets an individual take an idea from a concept to a creation that can be put in everyone's hands," Professor Ray said.

Professor Ray believes that "coding is the backbone of our interconnected world. Not only does it offer future job potential, but coding also strengthens problem-solving and analytical skills and prepares students to compete in the areas of science and engineering."

Professor Ray works with Huntsman students every day to ensure that they are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow. Recent graduate, Dallin Fukui, attributes the skills he learned in Professor Ray's Marketing and Sales Technology class to his new sales career with Nalco in Midland, Texas.
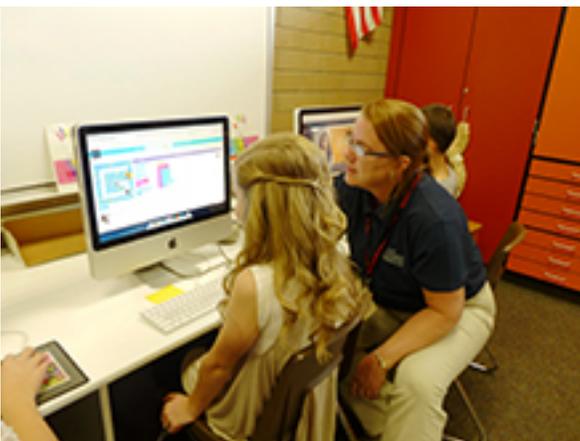
"I was really able to seal the deal with Nalco when I told them I was already familiar with Salesforce.com, a CRM (business software) Professor Ray had us explore in class," Fukui said. "Nalco uses Salesforce every day, and they were very impressed that I already had experience with it."

Professor Ray states that "technology companies and businesses are desperately seeking candidates with digital skills. To be successful and competitive in business in the future, business people will need to learn about technology and embrace it."

To learn more about the "Hour of Code" event, go here.