



**South Holland's, Jesus Fernandez and Toheeb Okenla Crowned
Top Young CEOs and Winners of the \$25,000 Grand Prize at
2013 NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge**

MasterCard Donates \$1.2 Million

***Sean "Diddy" Combs Presents Check for \$250K to Support
Entrepreneurship Education***

NEW YORK – Oct. 4, 2013 –Jesus Fernandez and Toheeb Okenla, from South Holland, IL, emerged from a field of 38 teen competitors to win the 2013 NFTE National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, presented by MasterCard. The competition took place on October 3 in New York City with a ceremony following a daylong series of competitive presentations.

Fernandez, a 17-year-old student at Thornwood High School and Okenla, also 17 and now studying at University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign took home the \$25,000 grand prize for their business, T&J Soccer, prevailing over the top 34 businesses from around the country. The prize package included a \$2,500 technology suite, \$2,500 of business travel, and other business services along with \$10,000 in cash.

Their award winning business plan for T&J Soccer centers on a manufacturing/retail business that sells soccer socks with pockets sewn into them for inserts that protect players' shins during soccer games. Jesus and Toheeb have found that thinking like entrepreneurs has helped them by strengthening their problem solving and critical thinking skills.

As active participants in the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), Jesus and Toheeb were able to hone their business plan and prepare for the competition through the entrepreneurship education programs provided by the international non-profit organization.

"I am so grateful to NFTE for helping us do what we love to do and how to make money doing it," said Toheeb Okenla.

“The National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge has taught us to believe and we can achieve our dreams. Now we are looking forward to scaling our business and taking it to the next level.” said Jesus Fernandez.

After the all-day competition, runners-up honors went to Dagim Girma from Alexandria, VA for his company, The Audible and Juny Nguyen from San Leandro, CA for his business, Neckcessories. Both runners-up won \$5,000 and two round-trip tickets on Southwest Airlines.

The winner of the fourth-annual NFTE Elevator Pitch Challenge, a lead in program to the day-long event presented by E*TRADE Bank, was Aliyah Wilson of Florissant, MO who took home \$2,500 in cash for her business, Cool Aid Crutch Wear. Additionally two runners-up won \$500 in cash. All of the winners of this challenge were selected by online public voting.

The finalists, who are all business plan competition winners from their respective regions, were required to develop and present original business plans as part of their entrepreneurial studies at school, based on NFTE’s experiential curriculum. NFTE students learn the real-world relevance of math, reading and writing to their businesses. The NFTE program provides them with tools to help them develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

Additionally, during the evening, Walt Macnee, Vice Chair of MasterCard presented NFTE with a 1.2 million dollar grant and all-star entrepreneur, Sean “Diddy” Combs presented a check to the organization for \$250,000. The donations will continue to help support the organization’s U.S. and global programming, which builds strong business literacy skills for youth and prepares them for successful futures.

“I was blown away by these students. Their passion for learning and desire to achieve reminded me of my early years when I made the decision to be my own boss. It is an honor for me to support NFTE and I applaud the work they do providing entrepreneurship education for these future CEOs,” states Sean “Diddy” Combs. “I fully expect to see these kids sitting across from me in a board room someday very soon.”

"At MasterCard, we recognize the positive impact that entrepreneurship education can have on students, their families and communities. It has the potential to put students on the path to financial inclusion and successful, productive futures" said Mr. Macnee. "We are proud to support NFTE in developing the next generation of entrepreneurs through initiatives like the National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge."

About the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship

Since 1987, the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) has been inspiring young people to pursue educational opportunities, start their own

businesses, and succeed in life. NFTE empowers students to own their futures in and out of the classroom and to find their own path to success. To date, NFTE has served over 500,000 young people worldwide. NFTE supports active programs in 21 U.S. locations and 13 countries around the world. To learn more visit www.nfte.com, like us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/NFTE](https://www.facebook.com/NFTE) or follow us on Twitter at @NFTE.

About MasterCard

MasterCard(NYSE: MA), www.mastercard.com, is a technology company in the global payments industry. We operate the world's fastest payments processing network, connecting consumers, financial institutions, merchants, governments and businesses in more than 210 countries and territories. MasterCard's products and solutions make everyday commerce activities – such as shopping, traveling, running a business and managing finances – easier, more secure and more efficient for everyone. Follow us on Twitter [@MasterCardNews](https://twitter.com/MasterCardNews), join the discussion on the [Cashless Pioneers Blog](#) and [subscribe](#) for the latest [news](#).

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