

Lube Stop goes greener with help of B-W students

Thursday, January 08, 2009

By Jaime Anton janton@sunnews.com

The News Sun

Baldwin-Wallace College students are helping one local business think leaner and greener.

After thorough analysis of various aspects like light usage and even waste, professor David Krueger's green business students presented Lube Stop Inc., based in Berea, with several creative ways to save cash and the environment.

Lube Stop, with 40 locations in the Cleveland and Akron-Canton areas, is Ohio's largest independently owned quick oil change company and has recently earned awards for its environmental stewardship. Every year this company recycles more than 400,000 gallons of motor oil, more than 30,000 gallons of antifreeze, and voluntarily recycles hundreds of thousands of oil filters.

B-W's green business class acquaints students with the general concepts of sustainability, which focuses on current and future needs while addressing social, environmental and economic well-being.

Students were organized into five consulting teams that each studied a certain aspect of Lube Stop's operation -- energy, green products, waste, biodiversity and corporate communications -- and presented them with recommendations to expound upon the business' green approach.

"I think every business could benefit by going through this process regularly," said Tom Morley, president of Lube Stop. "Northeast Ohio could become a lot more competitive if it integrated some of these ideas to reinvent businesses."

Students came up with a list of recommendations for Morley to consider. Energy consumption could be reduced by 50 percent by installing solar panels or sky lights. Bringing online more sustainability products such as reusable air and oil filters can extend the life of the product and reduce waste.

They also identified ways to recycle, to enhance green space, and a marketing program to attract more green customers.

"They came up with some very good recommendations, especially for an undergraduate class. I would say they came up with three or four recommendations per group so about 20 recommendations total. I am going to implement or strongly evaluate half of those, at least," Morley said.

The business is incorporating the class's new logo suggestion and will have a new energy policy.

One of the students, Nora Mahoney, said this was a great opportunity to apply classroom work in the real world.

"This application of research is really interesting because the end result is more than just a presentation; it is a true attempt to help a naturally unsustainable industry reinvent itself," she said. "It was an amazing experience for our class."

Krueger said the students did an excellent job.

"The students were green and what I mean by green is that they had no background. I had to take them from scratch and introduce them to concepts, help them understand what they needed to do, how to consult a client and ask questions," he said. "And they rose to the occasion, and the client was very happy with their work."