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Intuit 'Just Start' Winner to Take the Whine out of Dine

Ohio Couple's Idea to Start Kid-Friendly Cafe Wins $50,000 Prize

MOUNTAIN VIEW, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--

When Alissa and Noah DeRouchie take their two toddler sons to a restaurant, they dream of eating at a place that has no whine as they dine.

That dream just got one step closer to reality, courtesy of Intuit Inc. (Nasdaq:INTU), sponsor of the Just Start(TM) contest in which the couple was voted grand winner. The contest was part of Intuit's larger Just Start campaign to inspire and guide the 72 percent of Americans who dream of starting their own business. The Columbus, Ohio couple will receive a $50,000 in value startup grant to help them open a kid-friendly cafe that offers both healthy food and a play area for youngsters.

"When we take our kids out to eat usually they're really hungry first," said Alissa. "Then we have to cut their food and get them fed. By the time we get a chance to eat, they're bouncing off the walls. They're running around the restaurant. So we wanted to create a place where it would be OK for kids to run around and play while mom and dad sat down to a nice, healthy meal."

Entering the Just Start contest whetted their entrepreneurial appetite; winning gives them the chance to succeed.

"Throughout the contest, we've received a lot of great support and positive feedback -- especially from our community," said Alissa. "It's still an expensive proposition, but this gives us a jump start. It gives us the cash and expert guidance we need to make this dream a reality."

The DeRouchie's contest entry received the most votes at www.IWillJustStart.com, where Americans were asked to select from among five budding entrepreneurs vying for a business grant of $40,000 in cash and $10,000 in products and services. Voters were asked to review the finalists' entries and decide which offered the clearest, most viable business plan. In addition to the contest, IWillJustStart.com offered visitors useful getting-started tips and resources to start a business, including free QuickBooks Simple Start accounting software.

"Alissa and Noah have a great idea," said Rick Jensen, vice president of Intuit's small business division. "I have three kids myself and I'd love to have a kid-friendly cafe in my neighborhood where I could take them without worrying that they'll eat junk food or get bored. As with all our small business customers, we are committed to helping Alissa and Noah, along with the other finalists, start and successfully run this business and plan to provide guidance and support along the way."

Voters also selected two runners up, who will each receive a $5,000 cash prize. Carmin David, of Bolingbrook, Ill., wants to start a daycare center for children with special needs, and Daniel and Tina Garrido, of Seattle, are pursuing an Asian-inspired pet food business. Listening to the many people who asked that all five finalists receive a prize, Intuit gave both fourth and fifth place winners $2,500 to help them start their businesses.

Just Start Campaign

To encourage and support aspiring entrepreneurs, the contest was part of Intuit's Just Start campaign, which visited four cities across the nation. More than 1,500 budding business owners entered the contest and an additional 2,000 people pledged to turn their business dreams into reality. An independent panel of small business experts, including Anita Campbell of Small Business Trends, John Jantsch of Duct Tape Marketing, and Ramon Ray of Smallbiztechnology.com, selected the five finalists based on the clarity and feasibility of their idea. Voting was then open to the public from Jan. 8-31 to select the grand winner.

Free Small Business Accounting Software

As part of the Just Start campaign, Intuit began offering its easy-to-use QuickBooks Simple Start accounting software for free. Previous versions of the award-winning software were valued at $99.95. Trusted by more than 300,000 businesses, Simple Start helps new entrepreneurs be successful by letting them focus on running their business and not hassle with managing their finances. It tracks the essentials of "money in" and "money out," and keeps key business data organized for tax time. The software can be downloaded at www.simplestart.com.

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Founded in 1983, Intuit had annual revenue of $2.67 billion in its fiscal year 2007. The company has approximately 8,000 employees with major offices in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and other locations. More information can be found at www.intuit.com.

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