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PRESS RELEASE
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LEWISTON STUDENTS WIN SBA BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

LEWISTON – Lewiston High School Junior Matt Bissonnette was named winner of the SBA Business Plan Competition coordinated by the Maine Small Business Development Centers (Maine SBDC), an SBA resource partner. Monica Lessard, a senior at Lewiston High School, won second place. In a ceremony today at Lewiston High School, Bissonnette was awarded a \$500 U.S. Savings Bond provided by the Maine SBDC, headquartered at the University of Southern Maine. Maine SBDC certified business counselor Greg Gould made the presentation. Maurice Ouellette presented Lessard a \$100 U.S. Savings Bond from the Lewiston-Auburn Chapter of SCORE.

Jeffrey Butland, New England Regional Administrator of the Small Business Administration (SBA), also presented certificates today to all students who entered the competition. They included Kelly Jackson, Rick Doucette, Cassandra Gutshall, Elizabeth Paine, and Tanya Conner.

The Maine SBA office launched the competition last year in teacher Wendy Russell's Entrepreneurship class at Lewiston High School. Butland told students that his involvement at last year's awards ceremony inspired him to encourage the SBA to create a new web site especially for young entrepreneurs. That new site recently launched at <http://www.sba.gov/teen>. "In my mind," he said, "It was you folks who started it all." Mary McAleney, Maine SBA District Director, joined Butland in congratulating the students and said she hopes that other Maine high schools become involved in the business plan writing competition.

This year Bissonnette based his plan on a retail store that sells games and Lessard based hers on a photography business. Each student spent over 70 hours working on a business plan including an executive summary, the core plan, market research, three sets of financials, and supporting documents such as an SBA loan application. Russell, who has taught the Entrepreneurship class for three years, calls the project "a lot of work," explaining that she is "asking students to look at some serious questions in life." While their work may actually be useful in launching a future business, Russell said she designed the class so that lessons can be used immediately – such as making difficult choices and managing finances.

Business plans were judged by Maine SBDC business counselors Gregory Gould and Bob Kaspites whose offices are located at the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments in Auburn, Maine SBA loan officer Helen Brimigion, Lewiston-Auburn SCORE representatives Maurice Ouellette and Ralph Tuttle, and Elizabeth Hoy, commercial loan officer at Auburn Savings Bank. ###