CODY BEASON explains his concept of a no-coast bike, which would be designed like a motorcycle and make getting around easy in congested places like California, New York and China. A motor would be optional.

Agronomist wins top Business Idea prize

Miller gets $1,000 for automated irrigation shutoff

By MARY JANE SKALA
Hub Staff Writer

KEARNEY — Doug Miller, an agronomist, won the first-place prize of $1,000 in the Central Nebraska Business Idea Contest Wednesday night.

His idea: a simple automated irrigation shutoff that would allow farmers to save allocated irrigation water and the cost of running their pivots.

Miller, who lives 10 miles south of Kearney, was one of nine finalists in the contest, which was sponsored for the third year by the Center for Rural Research and Development at the College of Business and Technology at the University of Nebraska at Kearney. Thirty-nine ideas were submitted.

Miller, 52, created the device with a balance beam, a 12-volt power source and an electromagnet. The balance beam catches the rainfall on one side. A counterbalance on the other side measures the rain. Once a certain amount has fallen, such as half an inch or an inch, an electrical circuit is completed. That activates the electromagnet, which shuts off the power.

“It would also save money because pivots cost $1,000 for one complete turn, and sometimes it takes two or three days to get it around,” he said. “Sometimes, pivots are set to run even though it’s raining.”

The second-place prize of $500 went to Colleen Rickard, who created the Easy-C-Clean, a small box that quickly cleans and sanitizes masks that allow some people to sleep. Powered by UVC lighting, her device kills 99 percent of virus and bacteria mold in three minutes.

“There are 12 million of these masks in use. You can clean them in the microwave, but you can get burned by the steam,” Rickard said.

She said UVC has been effectively used at Johns Hopkins University for 70 years. The device can also be used to clean nursing equipment and is small enough to be put into a suitcase.

Maggie Ari, a student at UNK, won the $250 third-place prize for BreakAway Soccer, a training camp in which children could learn soccer skills. She envisioned an eight-week summer program...
and an eight-week autumn course.

"There are 1,200 soccer players in Columbus and 800 in Kearney, so I know there's a market," she said.

All 39 entrants submitted a two-minute video of their idea. Anyone age 14 and older could enter. Experts in the fields of each invention evaluated the ideas and selected the finalists, Shawn Kaskie, CRRD director, said.

Judges for the competition included Tim Burkink, dean of the College of Business and Technology at UNK, which also donated the $500 second prize; Dan Hoffman, president of Invest Nebraska, which donated the $250 third prize, and Allen Groenke, the entrepreneur-in-residence at UNK's College of Business and Technology. The first place prize was given by the Economic Council of Buffalo County.

Other finalists and their ideas included:

- Sri Seshadri and the Hotel Cosmos, an "astronomy retreat" hotel in the Sandhills with telescopes in each room so visitors could view the stars. "Guests can get lost in the silence of the spectacular skies," Seshadri said.
- Campus Closet by Julie Taylor: a secondhand shop at UNK that would be staffed by volunteers and would eventually expand to colleges all over the country.
- Safety Driver by Cesar Cruz: Drivers would be called to bars and restaurants to drive intoxicated people home in their own cars. He estimated the start-up cost at $30,000.
- No Coast Bikes by Cody Beason: He would design, build and sell bikes, similar to motorcycles, with optional motors, to make getting around more efficient and economical, especially in big cities.
- Small Town Sweets by Joleen Rupe: A bakery and coffee shop, located in a mall, with entrances both in the mall and outside. She would sell truffles, fudge and ice cream, and offer cooking classes in the kitchen.
- Pogos by Shad Bride: A wine bar for females, with fresh salads, wine and beer, "served by boys with chiseled bodies and debonair personalities who excel in intelligence, wit and engaging conversation." Bride added, "You won't need an online dating site. Just come down to Pogos."

Master of ceremonies was Leslie Means, program director at the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce. Means won a $10,000 first prize in another CRRD business idea contest in 2012. She and two other women developed Her View From Home, a successful online women's magazine.