

Startup Weekend Blue explores the blue economy

Daniel Ganes launches a winning ideal

By Sophia McCarron - May 4, 2016



“Once you set foot in that room, you have no way of knowing who’s going to be there and where your ideas are going to go,” said Island high school junior Daniel Gaines after winning second place at Startup Weekend Blue for Blue Network, a website that advertises job openings in the blue economy.

Startup Weekend Blue is an intensive three-day workshop focused on developing entrepreneurial projects in the blue economy that was held April 1-3 at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. The blue economy has to do with jobs that relate

to water, salt or fresh, from studying marine biology to developing a water purification system. Daniel Gaines’ idea, Blue Network, is an advertising site for jobs specifically relating to the blue economy.

Twenty-five entrepreneurs and 10 coaches worked on five water-related business ideas during the business accelerator event, which was sanctioned by the global Startup Weekend organization and attended by 45 to 50 people, including potential investors.

The weekend started with presenters making a one-minute pitch for their idea in front of an audience comprised of professional entrepreneurs and investors, all over the age of 30. If an audience member was interested in helping develop an idea, they joined the presenter’s team. Daniel was the leader of an eight-person team that worked to bring to life his vision of a website that posts internship, job, and volunteer opportunities in blue fields. He said, “One of the biggest challenges in controlling a large group of people, especially adults, is you don’t want to be an overlord, but you also don’t want to be too malleable. It’s about taking everyone’s ideas and trying to judge if they will work or not.”

The weekend taught Daniel more than how to handle a group of people; he also had to learn how to market and how to identify a need in a population. “We sent out surveys on Facebook,” said Daniel. “It taught me how to identify the precise customers I’d be marketing to, and how to communicate with those customers and present my ideas.”

To his knowledge, there isn’t any kind of Craigslist-style website specifically for blue jobs, and upon checking job listings in the local area, he found that companies looking for people trained in blue fields have had openings for months.

“Daniel has had a passion for sustainability and the environment his whole life,” Debra Gaines, his mother, said. “He was basically raised outdoors, either on the water or in the woods, and was just constantly connected to the environment.”

Daniel was told about Startup Weekend Blue by Marianne Larned, executive director of Martha’s Vineyard Youth Leadership Initiative. She said, “He had a passion, and we gave him the opportunity to shine. It was a wonderful synchronicity between his passion and us being able to help.”