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THE BENTON COUNTY
DAILY RECORD ROGERS EDITION

NWACC rallies for SIFE

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 Posted on Wednesday, April 5, 2006
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BENTONVILLE — The projects created by Northwest Arkansas Community College's Students in Free Enterprise team have had a strong impact in the community. Those same projects might also earn the team a win at regional competition this week.

SIFE is an international student organization that teaches business and ethics then encourages students to share the information in creative ways with their community. Each country has its own SIFE competition where the teams present their various community projects and they are judged on how well the projects teach SIFE's principles.

NWACC's team started in 1997 and won regional competition that year but quickly fizzled out, student Becky Hudson said. Last year the team was rejuvenated and quickly rose to victory by winning regionals. Wednesday, the team will defend its title as regional competition champions.

Hudson said the team had to develop projects that touched on at least one of the five SIFE principles: market economics, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, business ethics and success skills.

The project that had the biggest impact was titled "Project Unwritten," student Angie Donaghey-Francis said. "I felt like the impact of it was a lot deeper than our other projects," she said.

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The project created a curriculum for mothers who are patients at the substance abuse center Decision Point. The curriculum teaches the women how to handle the struggles of everyday life once they leave the center. They are taught basic computer skills and financial skills such as credit repair and budgeting with little money. The women will then get the opportunity to work with a local employment agency to get jobs once they leave the center. "These women are learning to take charge of their lives for the first time in their lives," Donaghey-Francis said. "Their lives are filled with blank pages and each life is unwritten."

The team has several other projects it has implemented this year that will be used at this week's competition including:

- "American Businesses: Are they Ethical?" — The students surveyed students and business leaders to determine their thoughts on ethics in American business compared to international business ethics. The study showed that most believe Americans have the worst business ethics. The team will host a forum soon to discuss the issue then will suggest to NWACC administrators that a business ethics course be required for business majors;
- "Job Interviews: Not as Easy as they Look" — Volunteers from the business community conducted mock interviews with marketing analyst students to give them feedback on improving job interview skills;
- "Lopez Encourages Minorities: Reach for Your Dreams" — John Lopez of Lopez Foods was a speaker for SIFE's Business Leaders Lectures Series and he spoke about his own success and catering to diversity in business; and
- "Entrepreneurs in Training" — Modeled after the University of Arkansas' "Willy Walton's Chocolate Factory," this project taught young people about how to develop their own business using the idea of a chocolate factory as the business.

The SIFE students will also be judged on sustainability, which is the team's ability to keep the program going despite a high turnover caused by the college being a twoyear institution.

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