

BUSINESS

Fontana resident advances in business contest

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A Fontana entrepreneur is one of the finalists in the 2022 Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest.

The contest has winnowed its field of competitors, with Fontana resident Todd Wilkins and his reinventauctions.com team advancing to the contest semi-finals.

Contest producers announced March 3 that a total of 55 entries from 24 communities around the state have advanced to the semi-final round of the 19th annual contest.

"To be a part of the Governor's Business Plan Contest is fun for us because we're kind of the underdogs," said Wilkins, who is 53. "We definitely have at least a decade of experience going up against the young guns."

UW-Whitewater alumnus Wilkins is one of three founding partners of Reinvent Auctions, a national dealer-to-dealer online wholesale marketplace for vehicles running the gamut from cars, trucks and SUVs to recreational vehicles, marine craft and motorcycles.

"We're the veterans, the veteran entrepreneurs," Wilkins said of himself and his co-founding partners, Milwaukee resident Paul J. Jones, a fellow UW-Whitewater alum and former vice president and chief strategist for Milwaukee-based Harley-Davidson, and Dean Stojka of Burr Ridge, Illinois, a car and powersports enthusiast and a former auto dealer.

"The old guys broke through. It's an honor for the seasoned alumni of the Whitewater Technology Center to have the opportunity to compete with some really young, talented minds. It makes you better. Surrounding yourself with people of talent is always the fastest way to achievement. It's just a great honor to compete — and we're not too old to learn."

A former auto dealer with 28 years of sales and marketing experience and 17-plus years as a man-

ager in the products and services industry in retail, Wilkins also brings business to business platform experience to Reinvent Auctions. A longtime member of the Chancellor's Advisory Board at UW-Whitewater, Wilkins helped launch the Technology Center at the college.

Wilkins, Jones and Stojka founded reinventauctions.com in 2018 as a high tech disruptor of the "archaic," time-consuming and costly platform of wholesale auction houses.

"We're creating a better marketplace," Wilkins said of the company's "designed by dealers and built by dealers" business model. "Reinvent Auctions is a frictionless technology that brings together the dealer community to eliminate time and money in the process of acquiring vehicles, RVs, boats, motorcycles. Ours is literally a global business disruption platform. Reinvent Auctions functions to facilitate easy dealer engagements in real-time. The goal is smooth business-to-business transactions with no interference from auction house middlemen. Dealers interact directly with other dealers for faster, easier transactions on an online platform — a dealer from Wisconsin can easily trade or sell with a dealer in California."

With the world increasingly pivoting to a virtual age with industry-disrupting companies like Uber and Amazon, especially in the wake of Covid-19, Wilkins said the online realm of the "frictionless marketplace" is fast displacing the traditional brick-and-mortar world, replacing the old school wholesale auction houses in the case of Reinvent Auctions.

"There are so many companies that have evolved to create the saving of time and money," Wilkins said. "Our team literally focused on how we can do that from a wholesale standpoint. The trusted dealer network, having the ability for payment, and logistics being programmed into this



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Fontana resident and UW-Whitewater alumnus Todd Wilkins is one of three founding partners of reinventauctions.com, recently selected as one of 55 advancing semi-finalists in the 2022 Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest. Reinventauctions.com is a business-disrupting online platform that seeks to reinvent the dealer-to-dealer wholesale marketplace for autos, recreational vehicles, boats and powersports equipment, including motorcycles.

technology gives that same frictionless capability on a wholesale level."

Reinvent Auction's management team has grown to also include Rob Gadek, chief growth officer; Fontana resident Bob Kirkland, chief creative officer; Jeff Klinger, chief brand officer; David Revere, west coast sales; Kevin Thomas, vice president and engineering; Allan Wick, lead software engineer; and advisors Scott Miller, Todd Docter and John Stojka.

"It's the most talented group of people I've been around and we're having a blast," Wilkins said. "We are really having fun preparing for the next round. We're all excited, because we feel our platform, and opportunity, is a global one."

Over the past four years, Reinvent Auctions has grown and evolved as it adapts to an ever-changing business environment, particularly in the wake of Covid-19 and significant national and global supply chain challenges.

"The reception's been great," Wilkins said of Reinvent Auction's evolving concept and virtual business model. "We've been able to eclipse 'great idea but does it work? It's working fabulously!"

About the contest

The mission of the Governor's Business Plan Contest is to encourage entrepreneurs in the startup stage of tech-enabled businesses in Wisconsin. The contest links up-and-coming entrepreneurs with a statewide network of community resources, expert advice, high-quality education, management talent and possible sources of capital.

The top dozen contestants will give live presentations at the annual Wisconsin Entrepreneurs' Conference in June, when category winners, as well as the 2022 grand prize winner, will be announced.

Sponsors are contributing cash, office space, legal assistance, accounting, marketing, social media management and more. About

\$2.5 million in cash and in-kind prizes have been awarded over time.

Wilkins said participation in the Governor's Business Plan Contest has been a positive experience.

"It's a great process, not only from learning about other innovators and technology, but you're also in a group of really passionate people that are using technology to make our marketplace, our entire state, a better place to do business — more efficient, more effective, better ROI (return on investment) in our case," he noted. "I've learned a lot about some really cool initiatives, whether it's philanthropy, HR ... The process has been really fantastic in meeting entrepreneurs that are passionate, whether its coding, building platforms for getting to market, raising resources. It's been a great opportunity for all of us."

Wilkins is feeling optimistic as he and his Reinvent Auctions team look move forward in the Governor's Business Plan Contest.

"It's been a blast," he said. "We're really a true disruption to the market, and we're just getting going. This contest for us is not about just winning, it's about major proof of concept for our deliverables to the market. We're just feel like we're with the smartest and most talented people in the state of Wisconsin, and it we can come out of this in prevailing position it says a lot about what we've worked for."

Wilkins is bullish on the state's burgeoning technology-based economy.

"Wisconsin's literally driven innovation at some awesome levels in the last 10 years, companies like Uline, Harley-Davidson and so many others that continue to grow," he said. "I think Wisconsin's really becoming a serious player in America."

More information about the Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest is available at govbizplancontest.com.

HEALTH



KELLY BILODEAU | Harvard Health Publications

You've got your father's smile, hazel eyes like your sister, and your grandmother's curly hair.

However, while your genes may confer some of your best traits, they can also bring some less-welcome inheritances — namely, a higher risk for certain health conditions.

Your odds for developing heart disease, diabetes, and cancer may be higher than average if these conditions run in your family.

By looking for clues in your family's health history, you may be able to identify risks for future illness and perhaps be able to reduce them, says Dr. Jennifer Haas, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. Preventive strategies started early can reduce your risk.

Gathering important details

When collecting family health information, there are certain items you should prioritize, says Haas.

"It's most important to ask about cancer and chronic diseases," she says. These include diabetes, heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), and Alzheimer's disease.

These are conditions that have a genetic component, so if others in your family have them, you may be more likely to develop them.

Whenever possible, it's also important to get specifics about your relative's condition. For example, if someone in your family had cancer,

you'll want to know where in the body the cancer started. "Many types of cancer spread to the liver," says Haas. But that doesn't mean the person had liver cancer.

Also ask how old they were when they were diagnosed.

"It is important to know age of onset. If a condition or cancer started when a family member was young, then an individual may benefit from starting screening or prevention earlier than generally recommended," says Haas.

Alert your doctor about any illnesses that affect more than one family member and at what ages they were diagnosed, says Haas.

Tips for gathering your history

There are a number of tools and strategies that can help you pull together a comprehensive family medical history.

The U.S. Surgeon General created "My Family Portrait" (phgkb.cdc.gov/FHH), which is an online resource designed to help you create a family health history.

"The nice thing about it is that people can all orient the information to themselves. So, everyone's tree is different but they can share information with others," says Haas. "This might be helpful if people are hesitant to disclose their information."

Another option is using a medical history binder that family members can contribute to and share. This can be done on paper or electronically using a Google document, says Haas.

These tools may also be used to help you to track who is biologically related and how closely — for example, half siblings versus full siblings, she says.

If you're adopted, have a small family, or don't have access to your biological relatives, there are still ways to get a glimpse into your genetics.

"Consider using a DNA testing kit to look for common genetic disease markers or to connect with biological family," says Haas. However, keep in mind that these decisions can be complicated and should be considered carefully, she says.

How to collect the information

When gathering your family medical history, start with immediate family members: your parents, brothers, sisters, and half siblings.

From there you can branch out to grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews.

"It is important to realize that it is only blood relatives that share genetic risk, although non-blood-related relatives can share exposures to things like secondhand tobacco smoke, which can also influence risk," says Haas.

While it's likely fairly easy to identify whom you might want to ask about family history, the challenge often comes in the asking itself.

While some family members might be open and willing to disclose personal information, others may view a request like this as highly intrusive. Approach the issue with sensitivity, and respect people's differences.

Below are some tips that can help ease the process.

Use gatherings as an opportunity: Family gatherings around the holidays can offer a good opportunity to broach the subject, because everyone is in one place at the same time.

Choose a designee: Assigning a point person to collect the information can be a helpful approach. "Families often have a person who is the 'historian,' which is a good place to start," says Haas.

Try different methods: People should decide whether the best approach is to speak with the family as a group or individually. Some people may be more honest one-on-one, says Haas. "Every family is different," she says.

Also, consider whether you should approach people in person, or if it's better to call on the phone or send an email. Your strategy may vary based on the individual. Some people might prefer a face-to-face-conversation, while others would rather talk on the phone or send the information in an email or using an online form.

Be clear: Always explain why you are asking. If people understand that the information may benefit others in the family, they may be more willing to share, says Haas. It may also help if you explain that you will share health information from others with them, so that they can better assess their own risks.

Protect personal privacy: Ask permission to share someone's health history with other family members. Respect each person's privacy unless you have explicitly discussed sharing the information.