



Journal photo by Tim Hynds
Briar Cliff sophomore Richard Miller III is marketing organic cooking oil. It's available at the Hamilton Boulevard HyVee in Sioux City.

It's easy being green, said BCU student entrepreneur

By Earl Horlyk

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SIOUX CITY – A Briar Cliff University sophomore, Richard Miller III know he doesn't look like a typical “oil” magnate.

That's just fine by Miller, since the Miami, Fla., native hopes his new line of organic soybean cooking oils will encourage people to “go green” while eating healthy.

“People are more knowledgeable about food nowadays,” he explained, “and that's why I think they will respond to a healthier cooking alternative to other oils.”

Currently available at the Marketplace Hy-Vee's organic food department and Briar Cliff's Roth Campus Bookstore, the Pureside Organics brand of cooking oil became Miller's brainstorm more than five months ago.

Securing grant money from Woodbury County's Rural Economic Development Department as well as from Briar Cliff, Miller enlisted the help of the Cherokee, Iowa-based American Natural Soy to produce and manufacture his cooking oil and the Des Moines-based PDM Distribution Services to bottle his product.

Getting a new product off the ground can be challenging. The 22-year-old Miller is already utilizing social networking tools like Facebook and Twitter to raise awareness.

“Advertising is very expensive,” Miller, inside his small office at the Eldon and Regina Roth Center for Entrepreneurship, explained. “This is why I want to generate an interactive, word-of-mouth campaign from people who are already using the oil.”

That includes a few restaurant chefs, who have been singing the praises of Miller's oil.

“A high-quality, soybean-based oil won't burn or smoke up like regular oils,” he said. “Professional chefs want you to smell and taste their food, not the cooking oil they're using.”

Likewise, Miller wants working moms to compare his Pureside Organics with other oils on the market.

“A local business that sells locally produced vegetable oils won't carry high transportation costs,” he said. “So, my oil is also more economical for people who have families.”

Coming up with marketing plans comes naturally for Miller, who describes himself as “an entrepreneur at heart.”

“Originally, I wanted to wanted to pursue psychology or sociology in college,” he explained, “but a marketing class I took in the 12th grade really opened my eyes to business.”

A member of the Briar Cliff Chargers football team, Miller learned how to cook while working in the college's cafeteria.

“As an athlete, I know the importance of eating healthy,” he said. “As someone who works in a cafeteria, I want to show people that cooking healthy is easier than you think.”

For Miller, becoming a CEO of his own business while still in school allows him to take his classroom knowledge into the real world.

“I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without the help of my college advisers,” he said. “They've been with me every step of the way.”

In fact, Miller hopes to keep his business going long after he leaves school.

“I'd like to keep Pureside Organics in Sioux City and turn it into a household name,” said the ambitious entrepreneur.

Perhaps, going green will also mean making some green.