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## **Washington Vision Therapy Wins New Vision Business Plan Competition**

*Contestants awarded in \$17,500 cash prizes*

**Yakima, Washington (December 9, 2011)** - - New Vision, the Yakima County Development Association, announced today that three emerging businesses were selected as winners of the association's second annual business plan contest. These entrepreneurs were selected by seven judges that met with business plan contestants yesterday.

**Washington Vision Therapy** won New Vision's Enterprise Challenge and received a check for \$10,000. The specialized eye clinic is located in Yakima. Dr. Ben Winters is a developmental optometrist who specializes in providing vision therapy to clients with a particular focus on helping kids. Winters and his staff help patients correct vision problems that cannot be corrected with glasses or contact lens alone. As the business grows, Winters plans to open more local clinics and eventually expand to other areas as well.

**Hop Central Brewery** placed second in the contest and received a check for \$5,000. Hop Central will be a new microbrewery in downtown Yakima. The company plans to handcraft uniquely hop centered beers which choice hops for the Yakima Valley.

**Milt's Original Gourmet BBQ Pellets** took third place in the contest and won \$2500. The Grandview-based company manufacturers flavor enhanced barbeque pellets made from tree fruit wood and food processing wastes. The company sells one and twenty pound bags of pellets through farm stores, barbeque dealers and other outlets.

The other five final contestants received consolation prizes that can be redeemed for legal or accounting support from local businesses. “We are thrilled with the results of our business plan contest”, said New Vision’s Tammy Everts. “All our contestants have enormous potential in terms of launching or running successful local businesses. If these emerging companies get off the ground according to their plans we should see them add opening or expanding facility and adding a significant number of jobs.”

Dr. Ben Winters, owner of Washington Vision Therapy, was excited to win the contest: “We benefited tremendously from participating in the business plan contest. Having over 40 business leaders review our plan and evaluate our business was invaluable. We learned a lot and the contest gave us very favorable exposure within our community. The funds we won will be plowed into our business and support our growth over the next year.”

New Vision’s Enterprise Challenge started in September and featured several educational events where contestants could learn more about managing a business. There was also a coaching round for final contestants where they could get advice from local experts. The development association is planning to run the contest again next year. According to Everts, “The contest helps anchor our initiative to support local entrepreneurs. We refined the contest and made it better this year and I am confident our 2012 contest will be even better.”

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**About New Vision, the Yakima County Development Association:** New Vision is a countywide economic development association that works to attract and grow business within the Yakima Valley. Founded in 1985, the association has helped dozens of companies expand within the region. Companies receiving New Vision help have created over 2500 new jobs these firms have a \$400+ million dollar annual economic impact on the regional economy.