

# Tagged for smart future

By SIMON EDWARDS

Simple but practical tags to help prevent people filling their vehicles with the wrong fuel are winning their student creators sales and accolades.

St Oran's College business team Lortep – that's petrol backwards – won the top award in the Young Enterprise Scheme – YES – oral business plan competition earlier this month.

Completing a triple for Hutt-based girls' schools against teams from nine other colleges around the region, Obsessionz from St Oran's and Danger Rangers from Sacred Heart College were second equal.

YES aims to give college students real world experience in creating, designing, producing and selling a product or service.

At Victoria University, in front of judges from YES and sponsor PricewaterhouseCoopers, the student companies had to present oral and written evidence on their business practice, marketing, operation, finance and innovation.

Lortep is producing coloured cable ties and labels that can be fitted around vehicle fuel inlets: green for 91 octane, red for 95/96, black for diesel – matching the colours of the pump nozzles. They've taken out a patent on their idea.

Managing director Megan Crow says reaction to their product is such that she and her fellow directors – Charlotte Kleinjan, communications, design; Victoria Row, production; Serena Austen-Scott, sales and marketing; Kristy Sarich, finance – have already pushed their initial sales target of 900 up to "1500 at least by the end of the year".

During initial brainstorming, their ideas included an alarm clock that at the set time pumped out breakfast scents like the smell of muffins or frying bacon to make people want to get up; or a complete cupcake making and decorating kit.

But Charlotte's uncle owns a car rental company, and a comment he made about how it can cost thousands of dollars in engine damage if a driver puts in the wrong fuel, got the girls thinking.

A movie fundraiser and the \$300 they won at



**Fuel reminder:** Lortep managing director Megan Crow, with one of the student company coloured tags that attach to vehicle fuel inlets as a reminder of which octane petrol or diesel to use.

the business plan competition has helped provide capital for going out to a plastics manufacturer and labelling expert to turn their prototype into a production run. Despite initial interest – and a sales strategy to go to car retailers, fleet operators, the AA and New Zealand-owned fuel chain Z – there's still a shortfall on capital.

"But we're just going to have to bite the bullet," Megan says.

Parents are the only legitimate source of borrowing; YES rules state commercial lenders are out.

"It's been a really interesting experience," Megan says of YES involvement so far.

"You don't realise how much goes into trying to start a business and getting together funding."

Megan, who wants a future career using her commerce and design skills, won a further boost to her ambitions when her application to be one of 80 students from around New Zealand at a Global Enterprise Challenge event was successful.

Erica Pope from Chilton Saint James and Steven Taylor from Hutt Valley High School were also selected and Megan says it was a high-pressure but enjoyable two days of dreaming up an innovative wool-based product that could be exported to Sweden, and then an interactive museum exhibit, plus all the sales, finance and business planning to underpin both.

Megan says she came away with more knowledge about working as a team and "thinking outside the box".

On August 6 and 7, all local YES companies will be selling their products at an expo at Porirua's North City Plaza.

Lortep can be contacted at [lortep.sto@gmail.com](mailto:lortep.sto@gmail.com).

Fellow St Oran's company Obsessionz has created funky patterns to stick on fingernails, and wrist bands for Kiwis supporting their team at the Rugby World Cup. Sacred Heart's Danger Rangers are producing a children's book in which their "girl power" characters offer solutions and safety tips in a range of calamities and emergencies.