

## Budding business people

By Katie Fallon, Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

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The future community and business leaders of America may, in fact, be enrolled right now at **Kennesaw State University**.

For the seventh straight year, the campus' chapter of **Students in Free Enterprise** was named a champion of the SIFE USA Regional Competition, an event that brought teams from colleges and universities from all over the southeast.



Team coordinator Stella Xu (Shoo), says the purpose of the group is to put together programs and events to teach members of the community from kindergarten through high school students to beginning business owners how to make good life, financial and business decisions.

"Our mission is to teach free enterprise to any audience," Ms. Xu said.

From teaching how to run a personal business and getting business loans to projecting expenses and maintaining business ethics, the school's SIFE chapter sponsors a wide range of activities throughout the community. Specific community service projects have also included raising funds for victims of Hurricane Katrina, planning a North American Consortium for Entrepreneurship symposium, holding a business plan competition and hosting a Merit Badge University for local Boy Scouts.

Ms. Xu said their efforts are simply to give knowledge to the community.

"These things can empower them if they know the dos and don'ts," Ms. Xu said.

At the recent regional competition, the 35 teams competed in seven leagues and the KSU team was the only group to receive top honors in all six judged categories of market economics, success skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, business ethics and program sustainability. The \$4,500 in prize money the team won, said Ms. Xu, an MBA student, will be used to reinvest in the group's programs as well as finance their airfare to compete in SIFE National Exposition in Kansas City, Mo., in May.

At the national competition, though, Ms. Xu said the team expects to encounter much stiffer competition.

"They have a lot of good projects," she said.

What teams are judged on at both competitions is basically the success of their body of work and the program they've conducted in the community over the last year in addition to how well they present themselves to the judges.

The KSU team, though, has not just won praise through competition. Their advisor in the **Coles College of Business**, Sam Walton Fellow Dr. Gary Roberts, said the students' hard work has paid off.

"They worked hard all year, and our impact on the community is clear from the awards in the individual topics," Roberts said.

The SIFE chapter at KSU has been around for 21 years, all of which have been under the guidance of Roberts. Traditionally, there are 20 permanent members such as project managers and officers, but Ms. Xu said that every semester, the chapter recruits roughly 200 students to join the team.

"Some stay with us, and some don't," Ms. Xu said.

In 2005, for instance, the group's annual report lists its membership at 72. As a team, the members invested more than 3,000 man-hours in 16 total projects.

SIFE is a worldwide nonprofit organization, with more than 900 college campus chapters nationwide, that seeks to teach students the free enterprise system so they can, in turn, reach out to their communities to help future entrepreneurs and at-risk students get on the right path to reaching their career goals.