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## PREPARING FOR A PROFESSION

# BizFest returns to KC

By LYNN FRANEY  
The Kansas City Star



CHRIS OBERHOLTZ | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

The BizFest Youth Entrepreneurship program helps area teens learn business skills. Carlos Ojeda Jr. (right) helped Alva Ruiz develop a tagline for her business Thursday.

A 17-year-old from Latin America who loves competition, William Suarez would have enjoyed watching World Cup soccer matches on TV all day Thursday.

But instead, he sat in a downtown Kansas City office building learning how to be a successful professional. He was one of about 30 teenagers in the BizFest Youth Entrepreneurship program, organized by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City.

It wasn't the most fun thing Suarez could have done for the day, but it was a smart thing to do for his life, he said.

Some day, when the Shawnee Mission East senior is a doctor and decides to start his own clinic, he'll be able to get the word out about how he can help people.

The students are absorbing business skills — such as writing a resume, understanding marketing and presenting themselves to others — during the free four-day BizFest.

It began Wednesday and will wrap up Saturday with a competition for the best business plan.

The winner receives a scholarship and competes in the national BizFest program in Philadelphia later this year. This is the third year for the Kansas City BizFest, which was held at the Aquila corporate headquarters.

Sinai Bustillo, a Mexican immigrant who will attend Johnson County Community College next fall, worked Thursday on her business plan. She's suggesting a fashion company that would enroll members who pay a monthly fee for access to fancy event clothing.

"I can be a teacher, and when I get my own money, I can work on my business," said Bustillo, 19.

Session trainers came from the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Foundation, which presents BizFest seminars across the country. The program mostly enrolls Hispanic participants, but it's open to anyone. BizFest has three main goals, said Shana Mosher, the foundation's senior director of program operations:

- Instill confidence. "We strive to get the students to believe in themselves," she said.
- Promote education. Too many Hispanic youngsters don't finish high school, Mosher said. The program aims to convince students of the need to stay in school, whether they want to be entrepreneurs or auto mechanics.
- Promote self-direction. "You're in charge of your own direction," Mosher said.

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