

Tropical treats a healthy fund-raiser for kids

Englewood, Colo. – IFEA member **Michael Haith** was brainstorming ways to stir up winter sales of his Maui Wowie fruit smoothies when he came up with this fresh idea: How about letting high school kids prepare the healthy drinks for their peers?

The Maui Wowie project launched at Colorado's Columbine High School last year, under administrative support to help students cope with the trauma caused by last spring's shooting. Students clad in Haith's eye-catching Hawaiian shirts manned hut-like carts in sports and recreation centers set up around the school, where they blended the fruit mixes with ice and bananas.

This year, students from Cherry Creek High School are using the program to raise funds.

While still in its testing stages, Haith wants to

offer Maui Wowie Unlimited to other student and non-profit groups. The program should prove to be a win-win

Helping school groups raise funds through food sales is nothing new, but these fruit concoctions are winning fresh accolades from kids and parental units.

"A lot of parents don't like fast food coming in to schools because of health concerns," Haith said. "We are providing one of the few healthy products kids will actually consume."

Haith's unique angle won seed money for his nascent program through U.S. West's New Ventures small-business grant competition. Out of a pool of more than 2,000 applicants, Haith was one of only 10 to receive the \$10,000 grants.

He said he fine-tuned the idea with some advice from the Cherry Creek Arts Festival, whose planners told him to simplify the fund-raising aspect of the program. Rather than splitting profits with the kids, he provides them with all the necessary equipment and free clothing, selling his brand-name fresh fruit

blends outright and leaving the learning experience up to them.

"That way, they're in control," Haith said. "We sell them the product and they can turn around and sell it at a higher price or eat it or spill it or do whatever they want with it." The kids keep whatever profit they make.



Kim Cook Photography © 2008

Kids sell fresh fruit drinks to raise money in a creative new fund-raiser, stirred up by a vendor to beat the off season doldrums.

situation for all involved, said the IFEA convention sponsor, teaching kids valuable food preparation and business skills while they earn funds for student activities. The idea also provides a perfect off-season market for Maui Wowie, which has 22 franchises in 18 states and Puerto Rico.

