

RECIPE FOR SUCCESS: Rapstrap inventor Andy Harsley at the Youth Inspired event. Picture: David Haber



Kids get inspired by Dragon slayer

■ Rapstrap entrepreneur talks business with youngsters

THE most successful entrepreneur to venture into the Dragons' Den has passed on his recipe for business success to North Lincolnshire youngsters.

Andy Harsley, 37, was a judge at the Youth Inspired event, which attracted teams from 10 of the region's secondary schools to Scunthorpe's Wortley House Hotel yesterday.

Mr Harsley shot to fame by impressing tycoons on the hit television show with his Rapstrap cable ties business, which now the subject of a £36-million contract.

School pupils at the event came up with their own ideas on potential uses for the Rapstrap.

And Mr Harsley said he was hoping some of them might even make it as far as the commercial market.

He said: "It gives them something at a stage where it is just starting to hit the market, but there are other possible uses for it."

"It is an opportunity for the kids

by **David Elliott**

david.elliott@qsmg.co.uk

to look at something and come up with their own suggestions as to what they would do if they were in this position.

"It would be great if something came out of it that ended up on the market because the kids would be able to say 'we did that'."

Mr Harsley first had the idea for the Rapstrap when he was 16 and set about researching and developing it after leaving university.

At first, he thought somebody else would have already thought of developing the band, which is reusable and more flexible than conventional cable ties.

He said he was pleased that there were now more opportunities for young people to learn about business while still at school.

He said: "When I started, these things didn't really exist."

"My only port of call was the Prince's Trust."

"Today, things have moved on and organisations like Young

Enterprise and Youth Inspired are all working on the same wavelength."

And he said his top tip to young business people would be to build up connections with existing organisations, such as the Prince's Trust and Youth Inspired.

"Especially when you are young, people will go out of their way to help you," he said.

"There is a lot of help and assistance out there."

"That is probably the main thing, to get yourself connected and they will point you in the right direction."

Students were brimming with ideas on ways to use the Rapstrap. Brumby Engineering College pupil Ashleigh Walker, 14, said they could be put to use in offices.

He said: "In an office, all the paper flows everywhere so you could put it in a Rapstrap."

"It could be a wristband as well, or even a clothes hanger."

Emma Mason, 14, who attends North Axholme School, said she had not expected to meet Mr Harsley.

She said: "I didn't think I would meet him when I was watching him on the TV."

"I want to go into a business in accounts if I can, so it is good when I come to places like this and people tell me how they started."

Youngsters also heard a keynote speech from Scunthorpe-born polar explorer Alan Chambers.

The event was organised by Rachel Dixon, a business studies teacher at Scunthorpe's Foxhills Technology College who developed the Youth Inspired brand.

She said: "We hope the kids have had a fantastic day and hope they have learned a lot about entrepreneurship and enterprise."

BRIGHT IDEAS

THE YOUTH Inspired event at Scunthorpe's Wortley House Hotel attracted teams of year 10 pupils from 10 of the region's secondary schools.

Brumby Engineering College won a contest against the nine other schools with their idea of using the Rapstraps as a vertical clothes rail.

As well as completing the Rapstrap challenge and pitching their ideas to judges, including Andy Harsley, the groups also took part in other activities.

An inspirational speech from



TEAM ACTIVITIES: Wortley House Hotel in Scunthorpe.

polar explorer Alan Chambers also formed part of the day.

The day was a first for the area and organisers are hoping to make it an annual occasion for schools in North Lincolnshire and beyond.

Next year's event could see Dragons' Den star James Caan coming to Scunthorpe after he invested in Mr Harsley's business, as seen on the television programme.

Organiser Rachel Dixon said: "I think once he sees the ideas the kids have come up with, he will be flying to Scunthorpe to come and see us next year."



FLEXIBLE: Youngsters came up with new uses for the Rapstrap.