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Young entrepreneur Keith Boyd to be honored with philanthropy award



By CASEY SMITH World Business Writer |
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Fifth-grader Keith Boyd is the CEO and founder of a lemonade business that raised \$150,000 for the Little Light House during 2014. But the young entrepreneur said that his proudest business-related accomplishment came just last month.

On Aug. 20, Boyd was able to give the inaugural gift from the Keith Boyd

Foundation to Landon, an area 5-year-old who now has a brand new speaking device. Boyd said he hopes the computer will help Landon share his thoughts.

"When I got my computer, my life changed," said Boyd, 11, who was born with cerebral palsy and received a device similar to Landon's at around the same age.

The devices that help Keith, Landon and scores of other people with special needs communicate cost several thousand dollars, typically ranging anywhere from \$3,000 to \$20,000, Keith's father James Boyd said. The cost of the computers may be covered by insurance, but the process to get the purchase approved can take several years and include initial denials for coverage. Keith began to make headlines during the summer of 2014 when the lemonade stand that he started in his front yard in 2012 grew into a massive volunteer effort to raise money for Little Light House's expansion capital campaign. Every Wednesday between June and August of 2014, Keith spearheaded a group of volunteers who ran 10 lemonade stands around Tulsa. Keith's Ice Cold Lemonade Stands ended up raising \$150,000 for Keith's alma mater the Little Light House, which offers tuition-free educational and therapeutic services to children with special needs from birth to 6 years old. After the months of effort that went into the lemonade stands was complete, Keith's mother Erin Boyd said that they got together with the group of volunteers and decided that they wanted to continue their efforts. Instead of giving to the Little Light House, which is now in the midst of campus construction that will more than double the number of students served, they decided to change the focus to give communication devices to kids who need them. The Keith Boyd Foundation, a 501©(3), was formed. Boyd no longer runs a lemonade stand, but



lemonade from Keith's Ice Cold Beverages is now available in more than 100 stores, including Reasor's locations, QuikTrips and Fiesta Marts.

The lemonade is made in Oklahoma and packaged by Whitlock Packaging Corp. in Fort Gibson. Earnings from the products go to the foundation, which is also starting to build a donor base. The Eastern Oklahoma Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals recently announced that Boyd will be among those receiving a National Philanthropy Day award Nov. 6. The award ceremony will take place just weeks after Boyd speaks at and serves as the honorary co-host of the 2015 Disability Employment Law Conference being sponsored by the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office. And just last month, Keith and his foundation were recognized at the Chick-fil-A Foundation's inaugural True Inspiration Awards. The Truett Cathy True Inspiration Awards are given to organizations or individuals who embody the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of Chick-fil-A Founder S. Truett Cathy.

Cathy "started out really young," Erin Boyd said. "Their spirits are similar."

Keith was inspired to start his lemonade business at 8 years old after his parents refused his request for an expensive toy truck. Christmas had passed, his birthday had passed, and he needed a plan. "We were like 'No way we're going to buy you this truck,'" Erin Boyd said. "You're going to have to figure it out yourself."

He did figure it out.

"I wanted a toy truck, and it was \$100, so my dad asked me to come up with an idea to make money," Keith said. He opted to sell lemonade because he wanted to choose "something that people enjoy a lot."

In addition to setting up in the front yard, Keith started a Facebook page for his business to let friends know when he would be selling and inviting them to come buy a cup. He carefully curated and purchased the snacks and other treats he wanted the stand to sell to make it more marketable.

At the end of the summer Keith had more money than he needed to buy the truck, so he donated the remainder of his earnings to the Little Light House. The summer of 2013 was filled with similar events, but Keith had increased his goal. He wanted to earn enough money to purchase a mower that he could pull behind his wheelchair so he could start a lawn business. Again, he exceeded his goal and the rest of the money went to the Little Light House.

When others became involved with his efforts during 2014 — for example, Chick-fil-A donated the lemonade that the 10 stands sold that summer — Keith still remained the project's lead. He even succeeded in securing three months of free billboard space from Lamar Advertising. While riding in the backseat, Erin Boyd said Keith noticed a billboard along the highway and decided he wanted one for the lemonade stand.



She told her son that renting billboards is expensive, so he contacted the company and explained the situation. “He typed out this long letter to Lamar about why he wanted a billboard and how it would help him. Sure enough, he secured a billboard for free for three months.”