

CEO at 20?**Behrend junior skips a step**

All while juggling classes, Tom Keefe starts his own company - and keeps it running

by Jennifer V. Colvin
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It's a scary thing to think about searching for a job after college; most seniors even shy away from it. However, a Behrend junior has got a jump on his job search and solved more "college worries" than just finding a job for himself.

At 20, junior Thomas D. Keefe, Jr has started his own company.

A production company that produces and promotes several programs, White Streak Productions is named for Keefe's trademarked white streak hair.

How did he start a company? To make a long story short, according to Keefe, he was tired of making money for other people.

"I wanted to make some (money) for myself. I'd been told over and over again 'your talented at this; this is what you should be doing for a living.' I got lucky and got into business with some very good people."

Those "very good people" helped Keefe not only get a jump start on White Streak Productions, but taught him to work in the entertainment industry.

So instead of taking the normal route of getting a job and "learning the ropes" Keefe took his show on the road - and took White Streak Productions with him.

"It was scary, but I just did it -- I couldn't let the fear get in my way," said Keefe.

A company started out of love for the entertainment industry, White Streak Productions has moved from a dream in Keefe's mind to a reality. And that reality



Tom Keefe, college student and CEO: After making money for others, Keefe decided to make money for himself by starting White Streak Productions. Keefe now juggles homework with entertainment bookings and celebrities.

came to life two Fridays ago at the Warner Theater in Downton Erie.

"I'm really lucky -- I get paid to do what I love the most in life," Keefe said. He continued, "There is no better feeling than watching a show I worked months on finally hit the stage."

A show that incorporates music and comedy, Keefe and his company made their debut on stage with the *Black Comedy All Star Jam*.

With host Adele Givens and other famous names such as Tony Woods, J.B. Smoove and *maija*, the show also debuted several Behrend students that White Streak manages on stage.

Those students were Huggz-N-Kisses (Conchita Dixon and Nicole Buther), the hosts of *Daddy's World* (James Sessions and Reggie Lakew), Daddy Lachi (Dorrell Jeremiah), and DJ Boy Wonder (Moses Johnson).

At first Keefe didn't want to include the word 'black' in the title of the show in fear of excluding people. "Typically when you say black comedy you get a black audience," said Keefe.

Though the name implies black comedy, Keefe says that the, "Black Comedy" should not scare away whites.

"Comedy breaks down all barriers; there is no black or white comedy. If a middle class white guy goes to this 'black' show, he's going to laugh; and he's going to laugh a lot," said Keefe.

"I love what I'm doing."

-Tom Keefe

White Streak Productions

The show does not end in Erie but will tour other cities like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh in the upcoming months.

Some may say this is a lot of work for a 20 year old to take on alone, but Keefe does not do it alone. Keefe has recruited another Behrend junior, Gina Leone.

"I needed someone I could trust with anything and someone who was extremely talented; the only person I could think of was Gina," said Keefe.

As director of promotions, Leone handles promotions for all of the events the company produces and or promotes.

Though Leone said she loves working for the company, she said it's hard work. But the work does pay off.

"I really enjoy the work. I look forward

to doing more of it in the future," said Leone.

Keefe said he sees Leone doing more of the promotions in the future.

"In ten years from now, I see me doing something totally different and I see Gina Leone running White Streak Productions," said Keefe.

But Leone doesn't necessarily think so - at least not yet.

"Right now, I am nowhere near prepared to run the company. Later on though, I'd love to do that for my life," said Leone.

As CEO of White Streak Productions, Keefe is responsible for putting the programs together.

"I produce the programs. Production means planning every aspect of a show -- the talent, lighting, stage directions -- even what everyone wears on stage," Keefe said.

Though his initial motive for beginning the company may have been money, Keefe says that is not the final objective.

"It's more important to me that the consumers are happy; I can give them some quality entertainment at an affordable price and they're happy with that."

In the future, Keefe says he looks forward to providing the community with many more great shows.

What's in the future for White Streak Productions? Keefe says he would like to get into more artist management. The company has also recently added three upcoming music groups and is working on special spring break trips.

The toughest part of being a college student and moonlighting as a CEO is juggling class work and managing entertainers. "Sometimes it's very hard. There are times when I have to leave for New York on split-second notice," Keefe said. Keefe admits this does hurt his grades sometimes. "It certainly doesn't help -- but when I have a choice between going to class or losing a fifty thousand dollar deal, the choice is obvious -- at least to me," Keefe said.

Professor emeritus gets grant

Edwin C. Masteller, Ph. D. continues entomological research in Arizona mountains

Edwin C. Masteller, Ph. D., professor emeritus for the Penn State-Behrend biology department, received a grant recently to continue his entomological research in the Arizona mountains.

The \$5,500 grant is from the US Department of the Interior through Southwest Parks and Monuments and will cover travel expenses.

The research is being done at Chiricahua National Monument, located in the southeastern corner of Arizona, an area referred to as "The Sky Islands."

According to Masteller the area is called "Sky Islands" because the mountains rise to heights of

cool spruce and fir woodlands abruptly from the arid Sonoran desert to the west and Chiricahua desert to the east. The area is a part of the Mexican extension of the Rockies. "It's like an oasis, with a Mexican flavor, that is isolated from everything else," said Masteller.

In 1992, Masteller started researching aquatic insects from ephemeral streams and springs in the park. He presented a paper in Dallas, Texas, at the 1994 Entomological Society of America meeting and sent a display on this research to a conference on Biodiversity and Management of the Madrean Archipelago in Tucson.

The interesting point of this

study for Masteller is the presence of water-dependent insects in streams that are dry for most of the year and located in a very isolated area. "The tenacity of these insects is impressive," said Masteller.

The 9,797 foot elevation of Chiricahua Peak provides the Sky Islands with a climate all their own. No seasons match the calendar division of spring, summer, fall and winter. There are two rainy seasons, one warm and one cold, separated by two dry seasons, one hot and one warm, according to Masteller.

Finding out where the insects come from each wet season does not mean just sampling. Masteller uses museums such as the Smithsonian and the Royal Ontario Museum in his research, and local people are also part of the puzzle. "Most people think it's just something to swat, so it's hard to get useful information," jokes Masteller. "You have to work it like a puzzle, combining research, information and sampling to find what you're after."

His first visit to Chiricahua was not a planned one. "I was visiting my daughter and wanted

to check out some local museums, but the snow on the mountains made travel too treacherous. I went to Chiricahua instead," said Masteller. He was stopped by the park naturalist who informed him that he was not allowed to collect insects. "I just started talking to him, and before I knew it, we were planning research together." The funding did not materialize for a few years, but that did not stop Masteller from continuing his research.

Masteller, who taught at Behrend for 27 years after graduating from Iowa State in 1967, has always been passionate in his search for rare insects. "I've sampled insects from Alaska to Costa Rica, and over the last thirty years, I've literally seen a million of 'em." He has also discovered ten previously unknown species, two of which are named after him. "It's exciting to pick up on an insect, and to know if I look hard enough, I'll find it," he said.

The challenge of finding something new is immense, and Masteller says that creativity plays an important role in finding rare insects. "My passion is

about the process, not just collecting, but figuring out the patterns." Masteller is excited about discovering and collecting in an area of the United States that hasn't been previously studied.

Masteller feels habitats are disappearing or being developed before we even have a chance to understand them, and he wants to discover patterns to interpret ecosystems while they are still relatively untouched. "I want to help people understand how ecosystems work," said Masteller. "How can you explain the value of a tree to someone?" By examining the interactions of insects in this habitat, Masteller hopes to be able to predict what changes could mean to the entire ecosystem.

"I like insects because I can find them on any stream anywhere, I don't have to work too hard to get them," said Masteller. Not too hard means travelling to Arizona, hiking up almost 10,000 feet into the Rockies, and camping for weeks at a time, all to catch a bug.

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