

Duo show they mean business

Couple in running for top competition

By Alice Hemmings

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AN ENTREPRENEURIAL Sevenoaks couple are on the shortlist for a national business competition.

Alan and Debbie Cooper, of Clarks Lane, Halstead, have made it to the final three in a regional Chronicle contest to win mentoring and free advertising.

Self-made millionaire Peter Bull, who owns the Hop Farm in Paddock Wood, is the local judge and mentor for the initiative, which aims to reward dynamic fledgling businesses with free publicity and advice.

The scheme, backed by Dragons' Den judge Deborah Meaden, is called Local Business Accelerators (LBA) and is being spearheaded by the voice of local media, the Newspaper Society, in association with the Chronicle.



IN THE RUNNING: Debbie and Alan Cooper
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In total, £15m of free advertising is offered and the overall winner will be mentored by the Dragons' Den star herself.

The Coopers are behind DRAE-AUK – the sole UK distributors for French-based fuel economy product Econokit.

The pack, which is designed for any motor engine, is claimed to save an average of ten per cent on fuel.

Former vehicle engineer Mr Cooper said: "I've always been interested in making things and I came up with the concept of a gadget that would reduce fuel consumption.

Deal

"Unfortunately, we realised quickly Econokit got there first – but we were more than happy to get in touch and strike a deal."

Mrs Cooper, who has had a varied business career, added: "Getting free advertising would be wonderful as that's one of those expenses we haven't really been able to cover."

Green team win an ad campaign

Husband and wife market eco product

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A FLEDGLING family business has won a free advertising campaign in the Chronicle.

Entrepreneurial pair Debbie and Alan Cooper, of Clerks Lane, Halstead, were selected by millionaire Peter Bull as the regional winners of the Local Business Accelerators (LBA) contest.

The married couple are also the brains behind DRAEAUK – the UK distributor of French fuel-economy product Econokit.

The LBA, run by the Chronicle and the Kent and Sussex Courier as an initiative set up with the Newspaper Society and backed by Dragons' Den judge Deborah Meaden, offers £15 million worth of free advertising and a chance for the overall winner to be mentored by Meaden herself.

As regional victors, the Coopers will receive business help, advice and support from Mr Bull, owner of the Hop Farm in Paddock Wood, as well as a complimentary run of marketing.

Mrs Cooper said she was "thrilled" to hear of Econokit's success.

She said the concept, originally designed by her husband, stemmed from their daughter's diagnosis of asthma, noting:



CHUFFED: Debbie and Alan Cooper with Econokits TWLD20120123B-002_C

"We've thought for some time that a contributory factor to her asthma was living near to a busy road when she was a baby."

Mr Cooper came up with the idea of an attachment to modern engines to reduce fumes and pollution – only to find the French Econokit already on the market.

Responsibility

But, refusing to be discouraged, he and his wife offered to market and distribute the product, which they claim reduces engine pollution by 60 per cent, in the UK.

Mr Cooper said the couple were keen to trial the product with a

local bus company, adding: "We're passionate about enabling people to help themselves and take responsibility for their own well being."

"New vehicles offer a solution but this can be cost prohibitive and the total cost of new vehicle production in CO2 terms and use of rare materials is enormous."

"We think that the Econokit products can help people to make improvements to their environment with their existing vehicle."

"We're so excited to have won the regional LBA contest – when you're a new business every little helps."