

How to get your invention on TV

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Lenfest Media Group in West Conshohocken is looking for the next Snuggie, ShamWow, Ped Egg or OxiClean.

Or in the case of Silverdale resident Bill DeHaven and Chester County resident Micah Bertin — who are Lenfest Media clients — the next Alligetter.

Thanks to direct response marketing and retail distribution by the company, DeHaven and Bertin's versatile garbage disposal retrieval device has sold an estimated 25,000 units since it was launched in 2008.

On June 22 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, at least 30 inventors have been invited to give a five-minute pitch for their product to a panel of judges at Lenfest Media's Discovery Day.

According to Lenfest Media's president of strategy and business development, Andy McKinley, the inventions that make the final cut will be unique, have mass appeal (especially to adults 50+), solve a common problem, be retail ready, be easy to demonstrate and explain, and cost about \$20.

"Any good inventor has to have good presentation skills, in terms of being able to pitch their product. A good product will do most of the work. And I think that Lenfest (has) a good eye, and they can see what's going to work well on television (infomercials)," said DeHaven, a self-employed engineer and handyman who built the prototype Alligetter based on Bertin's idea.

The Alligetter that is available to the public is made of a lightweight plastic, but the original prototype was made out of wood.

On a video on the Discovery Day YouTube channel, Bertin explained how he came up with the Alligetter in 2001. "I got started like many inventors. I was trying to solve a problem. Mine involved my son's sippy cup. The little stems from the cups kept falling into our garbage disposal. That might not sound like a big deal but I had a visceral fear of putting my hand in there.

I figured there had to be something on the market that would save me from sticking my hand in my disposal. I was wrong. So I set about solving my own problem. And the Alligetter was born. It's a simple grabbing tool with an LED light at the end. Goodbye, garbage disposal fear. Hello, sippy cup stem," he said.

The inventors and business partners, who met through their spare-time musician endeavors (they're both drummers), will attend Discovery Day to offer encouragement to the prospective inventors.

"We've already been through the process with Lenfest, and they've asked us to come down and be representatives of one of the products that have gone through their system," said DeHaven.

"We'll speak to them to talk them up. We'll be hanging around and meeting and talking to them about their inventions and answer their questions. We feel a responsibility ... to help others through our experiences. The community of inventors ... is extremely supportive," said Bertin, adding that he and DeHaven might be tapped to be part of a Discovery Day panel discussion.

"People with ideas and people with products are the inventors. A lot of people have come to me with ideas. It takes a lot of risk, and it takes a lot of know-how (to find investors, to secure a manufacturing deal, and marketing). If you're going to be an entrepreneur, you have to figure that out," said DeHaven, noting that he and Bertin spent a year raising \$250,000 to launch the Alligetter.

When McKinley was asked how he met the Alligetter's creators, he said it was through "networking with someone that knew them."

"I think they had been on QVC. We liked the product and liked their concept," he said.

On the Net

www.alligetter.com, www.lenfestmediadiscoveryday.com