GiraffeGear Interview

GiraffeGear is making its way into the winter sports industry! Nick Tang, Thomas Kronenberg, and Parker Smith, all seniors at Virginia Tech, noticed a need for their new gear this past January on a snowboarding trip when they realized there was no comfortable gear on the market that protects your neck.

GiraffeGear is designing a prototype of a neck gaiter that gives head and neck support for an added layer of protection when participating in intense and dangerous winter sports like skiing and snowboarding. The current prototype acts as a scarf in addition to preventing concussions and neck injuries.

“Right now we are still very early on in the design and prototyping phase and doing a lot of trial and error with our prototypes,” Tang says. The company has already gotten lots of potential customer response that ensures that their idea is a true need out in the market. “We have conducted surveys that found that 90% of skiers and snowboarders wear helmets. However, of that 90%, one in three is still suffering from concussions,” Kronenberg explains, “which is obviously saying helmets are not enough, so we thought: ‘what can we add to further prevent these common concussions for fellow skiers and snowboarders?’”

The Apex Center was pleased to send GiraffeGear to the TomTom Festival in Charlottesville, Virginia a few weeks ago through our Venture Scholars program. GiraffeGear got great feedback from their first live pitch competition, where they got to network with judges and competitors who have experience and advice to give regarding startups. “I think we did a good job of bringing our personality, our energy, and getting to actually present our project,” Kronenberg says, “From that experience, we were able to see the how information that we had and how Virginia Tech had prepared us for this competition had given our presentation everything that the judges needed to hear.” The team was approached by judges and other interested people to share their ideas about all the possibilities GiraffeGear could have in store.

Nick Tang, a Finance major, has been involved with the Apex Center since his freshman year when he lived in the Living and Learning Community in Pritchard. Through the LLC, Tang has had experience with the entrepreneurship atmosphere as well as gotten the chance to connect to many mentors and alumni in the entrepreneurship world. Tang explains, “Having access to these amazing resources really opened the doors for me and my team now working with our own venture.” The team has been working closely with the Apex Center’s Associate Director, Howard Haines, and an entrepreneurship mentor, Mark Mondry, to perfect bits and pieces in their business. Expect great things from GiraffeGear as their first version prototype is scheduled to be introduced to the public around October 2020!

Written by Shannon Pierce

Video Linked:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1n23i--eZxRxUgGXdZ8P1OPRKH0gcxb0s/view?usp=sharing>