



**Mission**

BiGAUSTIN assists small businesses to successfully grow by providing comprehensive education, tailored business counseling and flexible loans.

**Vision**

BiGAUSTIN strives to be the leader as a self-sustained small business development organization by providing innovative growth strategies to underserved entrepreneurs in Central Texas.

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News Release

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**BiGAUSTIN ANNOUNCES LOCAL ENTREPRENEUR FINALISTS FOR BEST BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION**

Three excited, enterprising entrepreneurs have learned that they are the finalists for BiGAUSTIN's BiG|idea Day business plan competition. They are Sharon Mays, owner of Baby Greens; Kim Wirth and Kristen Erdem, owners of World Wise Grains; and Adam Edwards and Nicholas Petersen, owners of Ref-use. The winner will be selected "LIVE" by the audience in an "American Idol" style competition as these entrepreneurs present their business plans at the BiG|idea Day luncheon on Friday, April 17, 2009, at the Hilton Hotel Downtown in Austin, Texas.

"It was a difficult task for the judges," said Jeannette Peten, President and CEO of BiGAUSTIN. "We received almost 70 applications, all with good ideas." The judges were people in Austin's business community and the companies who competed were those that have been in business at least six months and generate revenues of less than \$ 500,000. The winner receives \$10,000 in prizes and money to help them reach their business goals.

Mays' dream was born out of a commitment to become a vegetarian for one year. When she discovered the difficulty, at that time, in finding a good salad on the go, she decided to solve the problem. Baby Greens is a wholly unique fast food experience, serving fresh, delicious salads and salad wraps to go. The menu offers selections with meat or vegetarian options, made to order and complimented with delicious homemade salad dressings. Baby Greens has three locations – in South Austin, in North Austin and a downtown store scheduled to open April 2009.

Wirth and Erdem were brought together in their relocation to Austin during Hurricane Katrina. World Wise Grains grew out of their concern for their children and the desire to create healthy, versatile, tasty and easy to prepare foods for children. Today, they develop and market delicious, convenient, gluten-free, grain based products that meet the needs of the those who suffer from gluten-sensitivity or diagnosed Celiac disease. Healthcare providers recognize the benefits of the ingredient they call ARZU as gluten-free, whole grain, heart healthy, and diabetic friendly.

Edwards and Petersen take recycling to a whole new level. They create furniture and shelves from wood once destined for landfills, giving waste form and function. Ref-use creates flooring and furniture from recycled plywood destined for landfills in the Austin area. All of their finishes for the wood are non-toxic, formaldehyde-free, and low VOC. Their products are available throughout Texas, and the Northwest.

BiGAUSTIN is a non-profit organization that assists small businesses to grow successfully through comprehensive education, tailored business counseling and flexible loans. For more information, visit [www.bigAustin.org](http://www.bigAustin.org).

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