

Forbes contest down to five Femrite heads to New York

By Tim Krohn

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MANKATO — Mankato entrepreneur April Femrite is on her way to New York today to vie against four others for a \$ 100,000 prize being offered to a start-up company.

She will face a panel of Forbes.com judges and make a 10- minute pitch on her Naturally Bamboo clothing business.

"I'm nervous. But I know my stuff inside and out. It's just trying to get it to flow nicely in that presentation."

Femrite, who sells clothing made of bamboo fiber, already bested more than 1,500 other entrants in the country to become one of 20 semi- finalists. Profiles of those 20 were posted online with people able to vote for their favorite.

Femrite, who was No. 1

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April Femrite is competing in a Forbes.com contest to boost her Naturally Bamboo clothing business.

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CONTEST: Videos to be posted online

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through most of the online voting, said the experience has been a good one.

"I feel like I can't go out around Mankato any more. They all saw my picture in the paper; they say ' hey, you're that Forbes chick.' It's been a lot of fun."

This is the third year of the Forbes Boost Your Business Contest. Forbes is paying for Femrite's flight and three nights at the Carlton Hotel on Madison Avenue.

She has already supplied a 20-page business plan and a three-page business plan summary, but is still putting together her 10 minute power point.

Videos of the presentation she and the other finalists give will be posted on Forbes. com Nov. 3 withonline voting allowed until the end of the month.

The other four finalists are: NuBarter, a Georgia company that allows people to buy goods and services online with credits; Earthborn Studios, an Alabama potter; Ksplice, a Massachusetts company that developed software to install computer updates without rebooting; and Audissey Guides Media, a Massachusetts business that makes podcasts for walking tours.

The winner will be decided by a combination of online votes and points awarded by the panel of judges, with each comprising 50 percent toward the outcome. The winner gets \$50,000 in cash and \$50,000 in advertising on Forbes.com.

The mission of Femrite's company - www.naturallybambooclothing.com - is to produce clothing that is made from sweatshop- free manufacturers and to employ business practices that have the lowest impact on the environment.Naturally Bamboo clothing is manufactured by sewing facilities that abide by fair labor standards.

Her long-range goal is to create a supply chain that is entirely American for her bamboo fiber lines.

Femrite is currently seeking \$ 3 million in venture capital to launch her business to the next phase. She was recently one of a group of entrepreneurs invited to a Minnesota Venture event where each entrepreneur was given a chance to make a presentation to venture capitalists.

"One investor was really interested, so I'm hopeful."

She said more capital would go to marketing and sales of the clothing line and to begin the growing and processing of bamboo in Mississippi that she would use in her products.

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APRIL FEMRITE, Naturally Bamboo entrepreneur and Forbes Boost Your Business Contest finalist

