

People



Fourth-year business administration student and Clan basketball guard, Kevin Shaw (r), was one of the first athletes to field test the AFX ankle-strengthening device developed by alumni Matt Ferguson (l) and Rick Hall.

SFU helps alums grow new business

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Matt Ferguson and Rick Hall's connections with SFU did not end after they received their respective master's degrees in geography ('97) and kinesiology ('00).

In fact, since co-founding Progressive Health Innovations (PHI) along with another partner in 2005, the two alumni have been working with the university on a number of fronts.

For starters, three SFU Business students completed a market-research study for the duo's company as part of a National Research Council Canada - Industrial Research Assistance Program initiative managed by SFU's University Industry Liaison Office (UILO).

The data generated was used to formulate a marketing strategy for their first product—a foot- and ankle-strengthening device called the AFX or Ankle Foot maXimizer. It's a resistance-based rehabilitation and training device featuring flexible foot support and multi-directional strengthening that can be adapted for a variety of sports and activities.

Then last year, the pair worked with coach Scott Clark and the SFU men's basketball team to test the device's performance capabilities. The trials yielded impressive results, including increased agility, improved ankle stability, improvement in vertical lift and dramatic gains in dynamic balance.

"Coach Clark and the team were incredibly supportive," says Ferguson.

"We received invaluable feedback without which I don't think we would have been able to attract investment in this incredibly tough economic time. It's a perfect example of how SFU alumni can access the resources of their alma mater and really make a big difference in their lives."

There was also an SFU connection when it came to raising investment capital. One of the new company's key backers has been WUTIF Capital (the Western Universities Technology Innovation Fund), an angel investors' fund launched by UILO director Mike Volker.

To thank Clark and his basketball team, PHI donated 15 AFXs, worth more than \$2000, along with a customized training program.

"It's great to be able to give back in a small way," says Hall. "One day, when our company is successful, we'll be able to give more."

For more info including an AFX instructional video, visit <http://www.afx-online.com/>. By Erica Branda

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