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Contact: Natalie Connelly
(805) 756-7266

Orfalea College of Business Alumnus Featured on Cover of Money Magazine

SAN LUIS OBISPO - San Luis Obispo businessman David Karr, an Orfalea College of Business alumnus, made the cover of Money magazine for its story on daring entrepreneurs because of his unusual business with unique motivations.

Karr co-founded an herbal tea company, Guayaki, with partner and former Cal Poly student Alex Pryor in 1996. Karr and Pryor have worked tirelessly to keep their business alive - Karr managing the business end in the United States, Pryor coordinating operations in South America.

The hard work is starting to pay off. Guayaki's herbal tea, called yerba maté - made from the leaves of yerba maté plants in South America - dominates its niche market in the United States, with products in Safeway, Trader Joe's and chains like Whole Foods and Wild Oats. Karr is now looking to crack the specialty-coffee market.

Although the business is growing, money isn't the driving force behind Guayaki. Karr and Pryor have a vision to protect South American rainforests, while practicing sustainable agriculture to harvest the maté leaves.

"I am honored that Money magazine chose to tell the Guayaki story," Karr said. "Most importantly, however, it is inspiring to see that a magazine with national coverage and credibility is celebrating a business built upon a sustainable business platform.

"Sustainable business models, which take into account social justice, environmental stewardship and economic profit are practical, efficient, inherently respectful and good for humanity," Karr said. "I feel my university education at Cal Poly helped to infuse this sense of pragmatism into the soul of Guayaki. We all inhabit the same planet, and it is ours to respect, nourish and honor."

Pryor also credits Cal Poly for his success. He started his education at the university as a foreign student from Argentina. For his senior project, Pryor developed a business plan to grow and sell yerba maté.

"The courses I took in the Food Science and Nutrition Department and the friends I met at Cal Poly helped develop and inspire my vision - to introduce a healthy alternative to coffee to the U.S., while furthering social and environmental goals," said Pryor. "Professor Isola Kokumo woke up my ethical awareness in a class on world food politics. Kokumo encouraged me to market a healthy food product with a greater purpose to make the world a better place. Further, the food science faculty greatly supported my senior project, which was to introduce yerba maté, an unknown food product from my home country, to the U.S. Last, but not least, I met

my best friend and business partner, David Karr, at Cal Poly."

The university is happy that Karr and Pryor are achieving such great success with Guayaki.

"It's exciting that our alumni are being recognized for their achievements," said Teresa Swartz, Orfalea College of Business interim dean. "David exemplifies the very best of the mission of the Orfalea College of Business. We work hard to prepare socially responsible students for the kind of success that David has achieved, and we encourage students to explore new business possibilities and adventures. David's business success reflects well upon himself and upon the Orfalea College of Business. We look forward to learning of David's future accomplishments."

Karr currently resides in Los Osos.

Money magazine published Karr's story in the August edition.

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Cal Poly Public Affairs

California Polytechnic State University

San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

805.756.7266

polynews@calpoly.edu