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**Student entrepreneur is on a safety mission**

The brainstorm came to Sacramento State student Joseph Simpson in a business math class three years ago, and he can’t immediately recall the professor’s name. That’s understandable, because the energetic junior has a lot on his plate.

“Don’t just make one widget,” Simpson’s professor challenged. “Make millions of them.”

That got Simpson thinking about creating and mass-producing a safety cap for plastic bottles that could prevent people from overdosing on or abusing painkillers and other medications.

Factor in Simpson’s painful experience of seeing his younger brother, Steven, bedeviled by drug abuse. That ordeal persuaded him to put his college career on hold for a year while he devised an adaptable combination-lock device for prescription medication bottles. Eighteen months later and with the aid of a friend specializing in computer design, Simpson produced The Locking Cap, which has a patent pending and is for sale at prescription counters at Save Mart and Ralph’s grocery stores.

Simpson’s Locking Cap, which has 10,000 possible combinations, features four dials. It’s easy to operate and to reset. The company website includes reset instructions and an option that enables users to store their combination in case they forget the sequence.

“I persuaded the folks at Save Mart headquarters in Modesto to carry the product after several visits,” he says. Ralph’s followed suit, and now Simpson is trying to bring Rite Aid aboard. “I just returned from the corporate headquarters in Pennsylvania,” he notes, “my second trip to the East Coast.”

For now, however, the budding entrepreneur is on the road, marketing The Locking Cap about once a month and spending between 20 and 100 hours per week with his start-up company. His office is situated in the family residence in Lincoln, and the processing plant is a plastics firm in Fremont.

Despite his hectic schedule, the 21-year-old is on track to graduate next winter with a major in marketing and a minor in engineering. He expects the fledgling company
to turn a profit by next fall. “Who knows what happens once the company begins to
 grow,” he muses. "Perhaps I’ll offer an IPO."

Simpson’s optimism stems from the proclivity of society to abuse painkillers and
other prescription drugs. Research supports his point:

- More than 1 million children are accidentally poisoned by prescription drugs each
  year.
- These medications are the most commonly abused among children ages 12-17.
- Most teens get these drugs from their homes.
- Many teens begin abusing drugs a few pills at a time.
- The number of deaths from prescription drug overdoses is six times that of those
  who die each year from illegal drugs.

Joseph Simpson’s most poignant selling point, however, is the survival of a lone
teenager named Steven.

For more about The Locking Cap, visit www.thelockingcap.com/ or
www.facebook.com/TheLockingCap. For media assistance, contact Public Affairs at
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