Investors find business deals at Burkenroad conference

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A Texas-based convenience store chain was sold just three days after its executives presented to investors at the 18th Annual Burkenroad Reports Investment Conference. Susser Holdings Corp., parent company of Stripes Convenience Stores, was acquired for $1.8 billion by Energy Transfer Partners. Susser Holdings also controls Susser Petroleum Partners, one of the largest wholesale fuel distributors in Texas.



E. V. "Chip" Bonner, executive vice president of Susser Holdings, speaks at last Friday's Burkenroad Reports Investment Conference. Photo by Stephen Daigle.

The Burkenroad Conference, which took place on Friday (April 25) at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans, is an annual event that highlights companies covered by Burkenroad Reports, a program of the A. B. Freeman School of Business that publishes investment analysis reports on small-cap companies headquartered in the South. Since its founding in 1993, 29 companies covered by the program have been bought out, with Susser being the fifth in the last 10 months.

Program founder and director Peter Ricchiuti says it’s no coincidence.

“These deals don’t happen overnight, so they must’ve been working on it for a while, but Susser still came to the conference to present,” said Ricchiuti, who is the William B. Burkenroad Jr. Professor of Practice at the business school.

Of the five companies bought this year, four of them got extensive exposure through Ricchiuti’s recently released book about the Burkenroad Reports, *Stocks Under Rocks*.

It was Susser’s business model and financial performance, examined in depth by the Burkenroad students, which attracted Energy Transfer Partners.

“We looked at the Susser business model to capitalize on the strong economy and favorable demographic trends of Texas,” Jamie Welch, chief financial officer of Energy Transfer Equity, told the Wall Street Journal.

Thirty-four companies presented research at the conference to a record attendance of 750 people; about half were professional investors and the rest were individuals looking for investment ideas on their own. The Hancock Horizon Burkenroad Mutual Fund also uses the program’s student-produced research.

“Most investors own mutual funds that tend to own the same large-cap stocks, and these kinds of companies are not only interesting but provide some diversification,” Ricchiuti said.

– Maggy Baccinelli