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Startup Martinsville, Virginia, awards \$50,000 in startup grant funds

~ Six companies to open or expand in uptown Martinsville by September 30 ~

MARTINSVILLE, Va. (May 4, 2016) – The Chamber’s Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG) awarded a total of \$53,730 in grant funds, rent and utility subsidies and discounted Chamber member dues to six participants of “Startup Martinsville, Virginia,” an intensive eight week entrepreneurial boot-camp program, which culminated with a business plan competition held on April 28.

Grant funds of \$50,000 included \$35,000 from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development’s (VDHCD) Community Business Launch initiative, \$7,500 from C-PEG and \$7,500 from the city.

Award recipients included:

- Deshanta Hairston of Books & Crannies, a bookstore, \$12,715
- Eric Hruza and Stuart Hruza of A2Speed, an automotive performance parts and software company, \$10,090
- Stacey Davis, Infinity Dancewear, a dance-related products and apparel company, \$9,565
- Joseph Martin and Heather Webb of What’s Your Sign?, a custom apparel, printing, signs and promotional items company, \$8,000
- Nikea Tunnell of Southern Nosh restaurant, \$6,680
- William Brewer and Joshua Snider of Butchers & Brew Restaurant and Tavern, \$6,680

According to VDHD’s guidelines, award recipients have to open their businesses by September 30 in uptown Martinsville.

“This is truly an exciting day for the area. Fourteen area entrepreneurs completed the Startup Martinsville classes and are in a great position to either open or expand their businesses in Martinsville. While not all of the participants decided to compete, we believe all of them have the potential to be successful with their new business venture,” said Amanda Witt, executive director of C-PEG.

The City of Martinsville contracts with C-PEG to administer its small business and entrepreneurship development program. C-PEG is the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce's charitable affiliate. Witt also is the president of the chamber.

"When we were given a responsibility to administer the City of Martinsville's small business and entrepreneurship development program, we looked for an opportunity like this to generate enthusiasm in the uptown Martinsville area. We are appreciative of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's support and guidance," said C-PEG President Clay Campbell.

"We are equally appreciative of one of our key partners, Patrick Henry Community College, who developed and conducted the boot-camp classes. When the president of the community college personally signed on to be the lead instructor, we knew we had something special," he said.

A serial entrepreneur, PHCC President, Dr. Angeline Godwin, has started, owned and operated a number of retail, technology and service companies. She serves on the board of directors for the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship.

"This first class of participants was special. They came early to classes and worked extremely hard. All of them have the drive to be successful," said Dr. Godwin.

All classes were held at PHCC's Dalton IDEA Center in uptown Martinsville.

Mayor Danny Turner said, "I congratulate these award recipients and look forward to their grand openings in the next few months. Startup Martinsville is one of the more impressive programs I have seen here. We are attracting all kinds of people with all kinds of ideas. A person with an idea: that's the economy of the future."

In addition to PHCC, community partners in "Startup Martinsville, Virginia" include Martinsville Area Community Foundation, Longwood University's Small Business Development Center, SCORE, Martinsville Uptown Revitalization Association and area community banks.

Planning for the next "Startup Martinsville, Virginia" event is currently underway.

Martinsville-Henry County Chamber's Partnership for Economic Growth (C-PEG) is an independent, yet closely aligned, charitable affiliate of the Chamber of Commerce. C-PEG is charged with funding and supporting the area's efforts to improve economic growth.

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