

Winner in Wayne County StartUp Pitch Competition

Sodus Bay Outfitters awarded \$25,000

Lyons, NY – November 18, 2021
– The Wayne Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) held its third annual Wayne County Startup Pitch Competition on Wednesday, November 17 where Jennifer Evans of Sodus Bay Outfitters, Sodus Point, NY was awarded the grand prize of \$25,000.

Sodus Bay Outfitters is a new seasonal recreation equipment rental shop with kayaks, canoes, stand up paddle boards and beach bikes available for daily use. The business will also feature a retail shop with beach supplies, local souvenirs, and grocery items for boaters and campers.

Evans, the entrepreneur and owner, has already secured a store front at 8487 Greig St. in Sodus

Point. “The KickStart Contest was an invaluable experience for me,” Evans stated after the event. “The people and the process, including mentors, workshops, templates for my business plan, and financial projections, guided my business concept to a reality. The feedback from all of the judges was impactful, and the final event was a great experience.” The judges were impressed with her business plan that included realistic and profitable financial projections for the next three years. The Village of Sodus Point is optimistic about the business as well. Dave McDowell, Mayor of Sodus Point commented on the announcement. “We are very excited that Jennifer has been awarded this business grant. Her vision will provide residents and tourists with recreational products and services that are convenient by boat, car, and foot. This business will brighten the entry to the business district and attract people to visit our community.”

The Annual Startup Pitch Competition was announced in July and was open to any Wayne County entrepreneur with a local business in the concept to early startup stage. From among the applicants, five promising finalists were chosen to pitch their business plans to a live panel of five independent judges. The finalists included Tricia Kuntz of Fig Hollow Barn in Palmyra, Vicky Nguyen of Professionals Only: A Consignment Shop in Macedon, Jeannine King of Reaching New Heights in Reading in Palmyra, and Kellie Newton of Kellie Esthetics in Newark.



WEDC 2021 Pitch Competition Winner: (L-R) Jennifer Evans of Sodus Bay Outfitters next to competition judges John McDermott, Maureen Rutecki, Art Roberts, Amanda McDonald, and Don Pophal, with Brian Pincelli, Exec. Director of WEDC.



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Deb Hall, Senior Clerk
dhall@co.wayne.ny.us, 315-946-5919

“This competition is not really a competition at all,” stated Brian Pincelli, WEDC’s Executive Director. “It is a celebration of the entrepreneurial spirit that we want to cultivate in our local residents. We want to help every single entrepreneur develop their business ideas into successful business that opens their doors here in Wayne County.”

“This event really highlights the process of starting a business,” said Katie Bronson, Deputy Director of the WEDC who aligned entrepreneurs with professional business development assistance. “With help from our local SCORE mentors, we were able to give each contestant real world expertise to help them work through their ideas at no cost to them.” She also emphasized the significant role of the first round and final judges. “We are so very thankful to all of our judges who participated either in the first round or final round of this competition. Their feedback to contestants is truly world class and vital to the process of succeeding in new business.”

Past winners have proven that the startup assistance was a valuable catalyst to launch them into the next phase of their business venture. The inaugural winner in 2019 was Dave Murphy of Load Alone Inc. in Newark. Over the last two years, he has continued to grow his manufacturing and marketing presence utilizing the help he received from this program. “The effect of this award far outweighed the dollars received,” states Murphy. “It not only enabled me to pay for my patent, add staff, hire professional expertise, buy materials and tooling, and secure a manufacturing facility, but I was able expand my territory by going to conventions and connecting with people all over the northeast.” Today Load Alone has multiple contracts in the pipeline for its product which helps funeral directors load caskets and other mortuary items into and out of their vehicles with only one person and without physical exertion.

2020 winner Jamie Sonnevile of Agri-Trak Inc. in Williamson also commented on the effect of being a program winner. “The Wayne County KickStart competition gave me the confidence to go all in on Agri-Trak. I used the funds to speed up the development of our app which in turn increased our sales for 2021,” Sonnevile said. “Today, we are on schedule to create new jobs in Wayne County during 2022.” Sonnevile also recently entered the NY Food and Agriculture Business Competition which also held its final event on November 17. While she did not win the \$1 million grand prize, Agri-trak did win the "Audience Choice" award, voted by the public, for a startup that has the most innovative and promising pitch. Sonnevile will receive \$10,000 in cash, sponsored by Wegmans, and \$5,000 in marketing services from The Martin Group to promote her software, a farm management application suite developed especially for the apple industry.

WEDC has another financial assistance opportunity for new businesses called the Microburst Program which offers a 1:1 grant-loan combo ranging from \$10,000 to \$40,000. Applications must complete a full business plan, participate in a SCORE seminar video series, and submit a more detailed application. This money can be awarded to more than one recipient. Applications for Microburst are due by Wednesday, December 1, 2021. WEDC is a local development corporation of New York established to assist Wayne County businesses with loans and grants. For more information on these programs contact the Economic Development office at 315-946-5919 or visit www.WEDCny.com.

###END###