



## **NORTHSIDE PARTNERSHIP HONORS SEVEN WINNERS IN NORTHSIDE INCLUSIVE INNOVATION BUSINESS GRANT COMPETITION**

PITTSBURGH, PA, June 26, 2017 – Seven local businesses will share \$50,000 as winners of the first Northside Inclusive Innovation Business Grant Competition administered by the Riverside Center for Innovation and Urban Innovation21.

The winners each receive awards ranging from \$5,000 to \$10,000, made possible by a major grant from the BNY Mellon Foundation of Southwestern Pennsylvania and support from Urban Innovation21, Comcast Business, Buhl Foundation and Alloy26 emerging from the One Northside planning effort. Urban Innovation21 will provide each with a suite of services, including coaching from its Entrepreneur in Residence and access to pro bono legal support from Reed Smith, while Faros Properties, owner of Nova Place, will provide up to 20 seats in its Alloy26 co-working space free for one year.

Twenty-five entrepreneurs and business owners submitted business plan proposals in the competition and attended a four-week workshop series that included coaching and one-on-one support at the Riverside Center for Innovation. All will be honored at a June 27 reception from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Alloy 26, 100 South Commons, Suite 102, in Pittsburgh.

“RCI was honored to be a part of this very exciting program for North Side,” said Juan Garrett, executive director of the Riverside Center for Innovation. “We look forward to working with the winners in the future, along with the other 18 participating business owners, to realize their dreams.”

“The businessmen and women who took part in this competition have inspiring ideas that are already benefiting the Northside community,” said Kenya Boswell, president of the BNY Mellon Foundation for Southwestern Pennsylvania. “We’re excited to see our grant support help take their business plans to the next level.”

The winners are:

- Roxanne Easley, owner of Roxanne's Catering LLC, has been in the catering business since 2006. She received her MWBE certification with assistance from the Diversity Business Resource Center, housed at the Riverside Center for Innovation. She will use her award funds to move her catering operations to the Northside and secure a vehicle for deliveries.
- Alichia Parker, owner of Malaika Learning Center, which serves over 100 youths, has been an educator for many years. Malaika Learning Center opened in 2011 and provides educational services to its families as well as professional development training

for other educators. Funds will be used to expand programming to provide adult training services focused on job readiness, computer literacy and communication skills.

- Verna Arnold, owner of Arnold's Tea, opened up her doors three years ago in the historic Deutschtown neighborhood of the Northside and has since grown to be one of the top "coffee houses" in Pittsburgh, serving over 80 varieties of loose leaf tea. Arnold will use funds to expand seating at her location to accommodate more customers.
- Jordan Robarge is the owner of Revival Chili, a social venture that aims to hire and entrepreneurially train ex-offenders in a tiny house-style food truck selling Robarge's acclaimed chili. Funds will be used to finance equipment and offset employee training costs. Revival Chili launched in October 2016 and was featured at Light Up Night.
- Marcus Jeter is CEO of Resus Technologies, which has been in operation since June 2016. The company is developing the MyStylist app and website that will allow customers to submit a hair appointment request to an affiliated stylist who then meets the customer at their desired location. Resus Technologies, a graduate of Alpha Lab incubator, will use the funds to boost their marketing to attract new clientele.
- James Morris is the owner of Morris Tires, which has been in operation for more than a year. Before entering this competition, Morris won a business grant from OVR to purchase equipment and make renovations to the business. He will use the grant funds to invest in marketing and branding for the business.
- Jo Ana Vaz is the owner and operator of PIT Shop LLC, a business-to-business company that provides healthy snack options and fruit delivery services to Pittsburgh area businesses. The business was established in June 2016 and has added six new clients since the beginning of the year. Vaz will use the funds to secure a mini-warehouse and to finance an online marketing campaign.

The Northside Inclusive Innovation Business Grant Competition is the latest in a series of initiatives designed to drive inclusive innovation and accelerate entrepreneurship on the Northside by the Buhl Foundation, Faros Properties, Comcast and Urban Innovation<sup>21</sup>. These community partners have committed to combining their resources and expertise to realize a shared vision of an inclusive, connected, collaborative environment at Nova Place and in public spaces and the wider Northside community.

These efforts will continue to align with the Buhl Foundation's One Northside planning efforts to find and build consensus around the Northside's key needs and the strategies to address them. One of the Foundation's core themes is supporting efforts that encourage innovation and entrepreneurial solutions to improve quality of life and are equally accessible to all residents of the Northside.

#### About Riverside Center for Innovation

Riverside Center for Innovation is a hub for the entrepreneurial spirit of Pittsburgh, with office space, networking events and programs that support diversity, veterans, health technology, brownfield redevelopment and minority construction firms. It has generated more than \$500 million in economic impact and supported more than 3,500 jobs in the Pittsburgh area.

### About Urban Innovation21

Urban Innovation21 is a unique public-private partnership that is supporting the growth of entrepreneurship in our region's innovation economy and connecting that growth to underserved communities and the residents who live in those communities. Urban Innovation21 believes that an inclusive innovation economy is key to increasing regional competitiveness and sustainability. It is one of the first US-based organizations to work under the “inclusive innovation” paradigm.

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