

Startup Day Pitch Competition Ups the Ante with Two Cash Prizes for 2017

Six East Tennessee startups will vie for a chance to win up to \$15,000 to grow their business

Contact:

Deborah Robbins, Piper Communications, Deborah@piper-communications.com, 865-329-0553

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – The 2017 Startup Day pitch competition promises to be bigger than ever with the addition of a second cash prize. This year’s six competitors will pitch their businesses before a panel of investor judges on Thursday, September 21 at the U.S. Cellular Stage at The Bijou Theatre for the chance to win up to \$15,000. This is the fifth Startup Day pitch competition and the signature event of the second annual Innov865 Week, a celebration of Knoxville’s vibrant entrepreneurial community, September 18-22, 2017.

“Innov865 Week is our opportunity to highlight the diverse entrepreneurs who are driving innovation and economic growth in the region,” said Jim Biggs, Executive Director of the Knoxville Entrepreneur Center (KEC). KEC is a founding member of the Innov865 Alliance. “This year’s Startup Day pitch competitors more than exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit found here in East Tennessee. I am excited to see just how far they will go.”

New this year, the Startup Day pitch competition will feature two prize categories: the Startup Day 2017 Judge’s Choice Prize presented by the Innov865 Alliance, worth \$10,000, and the Startup Day 2017 Crowd Favorite Prize presented by SunTrust Bank, worth \$5,000. Competitors will have an opportunity to win both prizes for a grand total of \$15,000.

“SunTrust Bank is pleased and honored to join the Innov865 Alliance as a sponsor for the fifth annual Startup Day pitch competition. We are amazed at the entrepreneurial talent represented at this year’s competition and look forward to giving one deserving East Tennessee startup the financial kick-start they need to grow their business,” said Harry L. Gross, Jr., Knoxville City President and Executive Vice President of Commercial Banking at SunTrust Bank.

Graham Taylor, co-founder of [T&T Scientific](#) and the 2016 Startup Day cash prize winner, has made great strides with his business since pitching at last year’s competition. He has expanded his single-use liposome extrusion device product line, tripled his customer base, and has an international reach with products available for sale in 40 countries. To top it off, total revenues for T&T Scientific reached \$100,000 earlier in 2017 and the company has acquired seven patents since September 2016.

Startup Day is free and open to the public. Registration is required at <http://innov865week.com/register/>

The Innov865 Alliance selected the following six startups to compete in the 2017 pitch competition:

Mac Bartine, Smart RIA Smart RIA is a cloud-based, secure software platform that simplifies and automates regulatory compliance for the registered investment advisor (RIA) industry, serving firms that are regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission. Compliance management can be a costly and time-consuming task for businesses, especially those that do not have in-house expertise. Smart RIA's software streamlines the process through customized tools that use customer data to track and address compliance issues. This solution not only saves customers time and money, but allows them to focus on growing their business while remaining compliant and independent.

Anna Douglas, SkyNano Technologies SkyNano Technologies has developed an open system manufacturing technique to produce low cost, high value carbon nanotubes, a material with potential applications in a variety of areas from energy storage to consumer electronics. Compared to traditional manufacturing processes that require high vacuum and high pressure gas flow systems, SkyNano's patent-pending technology relies on the electrochemical conversion of carbon dioxide, resulting in a process that is lower in cost and scalable for commercial applications. Aside from lowering the cost of carbon nanotubes, SkyNano's technique offers a promising method for converting atmospheric carbon dioxide into useful functional nanomaterials.

Flora Ellis, Unveil Unveil is a free online tool that makes wedding planning much easier. The Unveil team has taken the experiences of a hundred couples who planned their own weddings and distilled their feedback into a comprehensive and easy-to-use tool. With Unveil, couples can compare vendors side-by-side to make important hiring decisions. In addition, Unveil offers a premium concierge service for couples who are looking for personal assistance in gathering pricing, availability, and other vendor details, tailored to their specific needs.

Brandon Hardin, Joyce Development, LLC Joyce Development, LLC has developed the Command Glove™, a lightweight, Bluetooth enabled glove embedded with sensors that control functions on electronic devices, such as cell phones, mp3 players, and tablets. With the Command Glove™, wearers can answer a call or change up their playlist with just the tap of a finger, all without having to remove the device from their pocket. The Command Glove™'s patent pending technology promises to change the way people interact with electronics, making it easier and more efficient to interface with wearables and mobile technology while on the go.

Jonaaron Jones, Volunteer Aerospace, Inc. Volunteer Aerospace, Inc. (VAI) uses metal powder bed additive manufacturing to produce hardware and fully functional prototypes for the aerospace and defense industries. VAI uses state-of-the-art additive equipment that has been production hardened to produce aerospace grade components with lower lead times. This competitive edge allows VAI to compete with traditional casting and forging processes.

Melissa Kreis-Stephens, Tomboy Organic Skincare Tomboy Organic Skincare is an organic skin care company for adventure enthusiasts that formulates plant salves, skin care products, and makeup using herbs and roots from the southeast's native deciduous forests. Born from an

experiment to create a poison ivy salve in a Tennessee high school science classroom, Tomboy Organic Skincare has expanded its focus to create earth-inspired, preservative-free products that provide relief from sunburn, sore muscles, scars, and insect bites and stings. The company was awarded the American Choice Best Brand Award in 2016 and its War Woman Scar Oil Salve was recognized as one of Trailblazer Girl's Top Skin Care Products of 2016.

About Innov865 Alliance

The Innov865 Alliance develops, supports, and promotes the Knoxville region's entrepreneurial ecosystem. It is a collaborative effort to celebrate and showcase Knoxville as a great place for entrepreneurs to start and grow businesses and increase access to capital. Innov865 Week is our signature event; however, the Alliance coordinates other activities throughout the year, including pitch competitions, educational opportunities, and social events. Founding members of the Innov865 Alliance include the University of Tennessee Research Foundation, Oak Ridge National Lab, PYA, UT's Anderson Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Three Roots Capital, Tennessee Valley Authority, Launch Tennessee and Knoxville Entrepreneur Center. Learn more about us at <http://innov865.com/>

About SunTrust Bank

SunTrust is a purpose-driven company dedicated to *Lighting the Way to Financial Well-Being* for the people, businesses, and communities it serves. Headquartered in Atlanta, SunTrust operates an extensive branch and ATM network throughout the high-growth Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states, along with 24-hour digital access. As of June 30, 2017, SunTrust had total assets of \$207 billion and total deposits of \$158 billion. In February 2016, SunTrust launched its onUp Movement, a national movement inspiring Americans to build financial confidence and reduce financial stress. The goal is to have five million people take a pledge and make a commitment to take control of their finances. As of August 2017, more than two million people have joined the Movement. Learn more at www.onUp.com.

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