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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Young Entrepreneurs Academy Students Secure Local Investments

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. – Students participating in the Knoxville Chamber’s Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA!) participated in an investor panel on Feb. 23, in which they pitched their business concepts to a panel of eight local investors. The event was presented by Pilot Flying J and supported by Alcoa Foundation and Clayton Bank.

Sixteen-year-old Noah Smith, with his business Eco-Rust, was also selected by the panel to move on to the Saunders Scholars Competition this May in Rochester, N.Y.

The 21 YEA! students created 12 unique businesses that they have been developing from the ground up since October 2015. Each business had five minutes to pitch their ideas to the panel, who later deliberated and allocated the combined pool of \$7,000 to the businesses of their choice. The students will now be able to use these real business investments for various start-up costs.

The allocated funds for each business were:

- Paint the Path: \$780
- Market Lawn: \$950
- Destination Dice: \$625
- Eco-Rust: \$1,000
- The ACBC Movement: \$320
- Culture DNA: \$355
- Desk Buddy: \$350
- Classroom Aquatics: \$570
- Travel Table: \$495
- Pawfect Paws: \$530
- Solas Putter: \$720
- Stiches By Design: \$310

The investor panel was made up of Tom Ballard, chief alliance office of PYA, Travis Edmondson, CEO of Clayton Bank, Paul Forsyth, attorney from Pitts & Lake Law firm, Eddie Mannis, president of Prestige Cleaners and Prestige Tuxedo, Christy Newman, community relations manager for Alcoa, Jason Hamilton, CPA principal of Rodefer Moss, Matt Testa, division director at Pilot Flying J, and Aaron Walters, chairman and CEO of Altar’d State.

“The past five months the YEA students have worked with resilience as they completed their business plans, prototypes, and mastering their pitch,” said Mackenzie Fox, YEA! program manager. “The investor panel revealed the hard work each business put in, and they now have the reward of real funds to move forward with launching their business. This unique opportunity for the students revealed the creativity, determination, and passion they have for business and impacting the Knoxville community.”

YEA! is a year-long, extra-curricular program that teaches middle and high school students how to start and run their own real businesses. Students learn from instructors, mentors, and members from the

local business community how to successfully launch their business and how to become more confident in their ideas and abilities.

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