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MEDIA RELEASE

STRATFORD PERTH CENTRE FOR BUSINESS HELPS TO LAUNCH NINE LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES

Starter Company Plus Grants Totalling \$35K Presented to Promising Start-ups

Stratford, Ontario –Monday, March 8, 2021... **Today the Stratford Perth Centre for Business presented 9 grants totalling \$35,000 to local entrepreneurs within Stratford and Perth County.** The Starter Company Plus program is funded by the Province of Ontario, and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, and delivers 2 cohorts each year. The most recent cohort completed the 6-week training program online, allowing its entrepreneurs to access business education, one-on-one coaching and professional mentorship virtually.

Program Graduates:

Alondra Galvez, *El Cactus Taco Shop*: A graduate of the Stratford Chef School, Alondra is opening El Cactus Taco Shop, a unique taco bar soon to be located on Ontario Street in downtown Stratford. Drawing from her Mexican roots, Alondra saw a need in the market and participated in the Starter Company Plus program to launch her new taco bar with a focus on take-out. Website under construction.

Amanda Modaragamage, *Stratford Visiting Foot Care*: Amanda's unique business model and experience as an Advanced Foot Care Nurse offers complete-services in the comfort of your home servicing Stratford and surrounding areas. Amanda launched her company in 2020 with the help of the Stratford Perth Centre for Business and moved into the Starter Company Plus program to understand the back end of operating a new business. <https://stratfordvisitingfootcare.ca>

Bruce Borgundvaag, *Alastair Home & Design*: With a background in design Bruce and his partner Allen loves all things home décor and interiors, which prompted them to launce Alastair Home & Design, an online home décor company with plans to expand to a brick-and-mortar location in Stratford. Looking to partner with local artisans to feature in Alastair Home & Design, Bruce and Allan plan to offer a unique shopping experience to their newly discovered target market. Website under construction.

Elissa Vann, *Vann's Fine Bakery*: As existing clients of the Stratford Centre for Business the husband-and-wife team Derek and Elissa Vann constructed a bakery at 215 Douro Street. in Stratford. Due to COVID they moved their business model to an online store featuring artisanal breads and have seen a rise in customer support as they create their brand. They plan to open a retail location once construction of their space is complete. <https://vannsbakery.com>

Helen Dowd, *Operation Organize*: Helen Dowd is the owner of Operation Organize. Her company offers packaged services to the seniors in our community. Her organization will deliver pre-made meals, make meals in house, assist loved ones with organizing their home and provide companionship, giving seniors living alone the ability to thrive in their environment. Helen has a team of highly qualified and insured partners who are ready to serve the Perth County senior community. Website under construction.

Jordan Hayness, *My Brewery*: Jordan plans to open My Brewery in Stratford in the months to come. Through the Starter Company Plus program Jordan was able to complete the start-up phase, connect with professional mentors and build a business that will achieve his business goal of opening his new brewery. Website under construction.

Lara MacMillan, *The Nest*: Lara is a local artist and teacher and has recently launched The Nest, a community space of local artists. The Nest will house Lara's art classes which are currently being offered online as well as a space which can be rented (post COVID) to fellow, like minded artist for rehearsal or studio space. Website under construction

Naomi Clement, Naomi Clement Industries: Naomi is a Stratford based potter and educator who not only creates impactful pieces but also offers classes, workshops and lectures across Canada and the USA. Due to COVID, and with the help of the Starter Company, Naomi increased her online presence and plans to use the grant to help fund her online store and expand her virtual classes and workshops. <https://naomiclement.com>

Wendy Bennewies Grayson Mills Wedding and Events Centre: Wendy is the owner of the highly anticipated Grayson Mills Wedding And Events centre soon to open on the corner of Erie Street and St. Patrick street in Stratford. Wendy and her team plan to open the venue later this year, with pre-bookings already in progress. Through the Starter Company program Wendy was able to set-up the pre-booking packages and create the Grayson Mills brand. <https://www.graysonmills.ca>

The participating entrepreneurs received 6 weeks of business education and mentorship on-business ideation, development, marketing, financials and brand create, with continued mentorship and support through the Stratford Perth Centre for Business.

The Stratford Perth Centre for Business is the Regional Grant Administrator of the Starter Company Plus Program and operates as a department of investStratford in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Quotes

“Aside from the structured learning the Starter Company Plus program offers, there is a unique experience that takes place among the participants that I found unexpected but extremely important. There is the creation of this unique community of new entrepreneurs, where they can navigate the 6-week course material together and rely, not only on the program instructors but also on each other. Becoming an entrepreneur can be a lonely experience and the sense of support and community created within the 6 weeks last as a peer networking group for many long after the program concludes.”

Trena Hough, Program and Event Coordinator, Stratford Perth Centre for Business

“Starter Company Plus has been a flagship grant program of the Stratford Perth Centre for Business for many years. I am thrilled to see this excited and inspired group of business owners get started and grow in our community.” **Joani Gerber, CEO, investStratford**

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About the Stratford-Perth Centre for Business

The Stratford Perth Centre for Business is committed to helping small business owners achieve their business goals. The Centre offers local small business support and complimentary consultation and easy access to resources, including business start-up services to support the development of new and already established small businesses. In addition to advisory services, events, seminars and training opportunities are held throughout the year to meet small business essentials. For more info: stratfordperthbusiness.ca email:info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca or Facebook.

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