



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **STRATFORD PERTH CENTRE FOR BUSINESS EMPOWERS LOCAL SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMY**

### ***Starter Company Plus Grants Presented to Seven Promising Entrepreneurs***

Stratford, Ontario – Tuesday, April 7, 2020... **Today the Stratford Perth Centre for Business presented 7 grants totaling \$35,000 to local entrepreneurs within Stratford and Perth County.** The new businesses include the industries of design wholesale, landscape, retail, carpentry, fitness and the arts. Within the Starter Company Plus program, which is funded by the Province of Ontario, and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, each recipient receives 6 weeks of business education and training along with \$5,000 and ongoing mentorship and support.

Recipients for this cohort included:

*Nick Bohner – Nick is the owner of Nix Snowblowing located in the City of Stratford. As a teen, Nick was a recipient of the province's Summer Company grant program and in turn, used that funding to create a landscaping and snow removal business that now employs around 20 people and services both Stratford and London. Nick is using the Starter Company Plus program to take his business in new and innovative directions in the landscape space.*

*Kim McCarthy – Kim is the owner of Heart Space Gifts, a gift wholesale business where Kim designs all the goods sold. Creating home goods and clothing that is both locally designed and made in Canada, Kim has already begun to sell her wares to retailers in the City of Stratford and beyond.*

*Andy Schofield – Andy is the owner of Wholly Cheese, a local cheese distributor and retailer. Andy got his start selling cheese at one of the local prominent grocery chains and ended up loving cheese so much, that he left there to start his own cheese distribution business. Now looking to expand into the St Jacob's farmer's market, Andy is the local go-to source for all things cheese and a trusted wholesaler for local cheese markets.*

*Pamela Coneybeare – Owner of La Osa Jewelry, Pamela has recently expanded her retail business and grown both her space and her partnerships to bring vintage style and her unique and sought-after creations to Ontario St., in Stratford. La Osa opened its newly expanded and renovated doors on March 28, showcasing her vintage clothing boutique, jewelry designs and her partnership with local woodworker, Halibut Woodworking. Andrew Hunter, owner of Halibut Woodworking, debuts his line of modern furniture inside of La Osa, creating a collaborative space.*

*Andrew Hunter – Andrew is the owner of Halibut Woodworking, a local design studio, where he builds and designs high quality, custom residential furniture, houseware and cabinetry. Andrew has just launched his first showroom series inside a collaboration with Pamela Coneybeare of La Osa Jewelry in downtown Stratford.*

*Leigh Cooney – Leigh is the owner of the newly re-imagined space, The Little Prince. Leigh along with his manager, Carla Coles, have opened this tiny theatre space and café right in the heart of Stratford. The Little Prince will not only host live, theatrical events, but cinematic projects, festivals and children's programming along with a small café. All of this inside Leigh's small space.*

*Nicole Smith – Nicole is the owner/operator of Cirquesmith, Stratford's only school for the aerial arts. A former circus performer who has trained at the Ecole de National du Cirque, Nicole brings her big vision to her school. She currently offers classes in the aerial arts but hopes to one build a circus training destination.*

The participating entrepreneurs received 6 weeks of business education and mentorship on-business ideation, development, marketing, financials and brand before presenting their business plans to a panel of local community stakeholders, with the mentorship piece continuing on for a maximum of three years.

*“The \$5,000 investment will ultimately help these businesses succeed,”* said **Holly Mortimer, Business Advisor at the Stratford Perth Centre for Business.** *“The entrepreneurs will use this money to hire staff, invest in technology and expand their operations.”*

*“The investment the Stratford Perth Centre for Business has made is incredibly important to the local economy,”* said **Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford.** *“Supporting our entrepreneurs directly means they can employ people, buy inventory, equipment and continue to generate prosperity in our community.”*

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 In collaboration with the Province of Ontario, the Stratford Perth Centre for Business is responsible for governing the operations of the Starter Company Program, including: the establishment of a Grant Review Panel, management, oversight and disbursement of all Starter Company submissions and allocation of micro-grants across the wider Perth County region encompassing Stratford, St. Marys and the four lower tiers.

The Starter Company Plus program will continue in the Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County area through March 2021 although exact timing remains unclear at present due to COVID-19. A call for applications for the next cohort is anticipated to be announced in the fall of 2020.

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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 information visit: [stratfordperthbusiness.ca](http://stratfordperthbusiness.ca) email: [info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca](mailto:info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca) or follow on Facebook*

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