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Features

Startup Scaleup brings 1,200 entrepreneurs to Gordon Square

KARIN CONNELLY | THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2015



BOB PERKOSKI
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Twelve hundred people descended on the [Gordon Square Arts District](#) yesterday, Wednesday June 17 for [Startup Scaleup](#), [JumpStart](#)'s inaugural event to celebrate and educate entrepreneurs, startups and small business owners. Sponsored by the [Burton D. Morgan Foundation](#) and [Medical Mutual](#), the event offered resources, networking for Cleveland's startup businesses.

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Attendees were greeted at the Capitol Theatre by Alexis Bowers and Ava Pollas, recent graduates of Orchard STEM School in Cleveland, who were selling lemonade and cookies from the booth they helped design and build as part of their work with [Lemonade Day Northeast Ohio](#), an entrepreneurial education program. "They not only focused on business and money, but the class also infused infrastructure and engineering concepts," says Tamera Zelwin, their teacher.

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The day kicked off at 11 am with registration for the Sidewalk to Stage pitch competition. More than 80 companies applied for the chance to spend five-minutes showcasing their business ideas. Six finalists were chosen by a panel of judges and winners in each of three categories – Starting Up, Scaling Up and Creating Opportunity – took home \$5,000 prizes.

“It’s also incredible that we received 86 pitch applications in less than one hour,” says Amy Martin, JumpStart marketing principal. “It shows you how eager people are to bring their ideas to life. It is absolutely inspiring.”

Mel McGee of [We Can Code IT](#), which encourages women and minorities to enter technology and engineering fields through teaching coding boot camps, won for scaling up. “The Startup Scaleup event clearly demonstrated JumpStart’s commitment and support to not only entrepreneurs, but to the Cleveland community,” says McGee. “All of the Sidewalk to Stage winners were businesses working to positively impact Cleveland not only economically, but socially. I was thrilled that We Can Code IT won. The money provided will help us train a new wave of diverse software engineers through our coding boot camp, giving more Clevelanders the opportunity to support themselves and their families through careers in technology.”

Muhga Eltigani of [NaturAll Club](#), which sells hand-made hair conditioners through monthly mail-order subscriptions, won for the starting up category. Christina Keegan of [Guide to Kulchur](#), a cooperative bookstore that acts as an incubator for emerging and marginalized voices in print, won for creating opportunity.

The other three finalists were [ApplyBoard](#), [Althar Audio](#) and [EmployStream](#). Rob Sable, founder of EmployStream, which uses software-as-a-service to digitize and customize employers’ hiring processes, started the company after 20 years in software development. He decided to apply for the competition after learning about Startup Scaleup in his hunt for employees. “I’ve learned a lot and felt like I helped a lot,” he says. “It just sounded like fun so I decided to do it.”



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NEO Up-And-Comers Pitch Competition at the Capitol Theatre

Also early in the day was the NEO Up-and-Comers Pitch Competition, in which 12 promising high-tech startups presented their companies to a panel of judges and a live audience. [Apollo Medical Devices](#), which makes low-cost, fast diagnostic blood testing, took the top prize of \$20,000.

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[O2 RegenTech](#), which makes wound dressings that combine oxygen with a moist healing environment to treat diabetic ulcers effectively and affordably, won \$10,000. “OXOID is affordable and easy to use because it’s a wound dressing,” CEO Andreas Inmann told the audience during his pitch. “It provides moisture, oxygen, and prevents infection.” The wound dressings are in a testing phase for FDA approval and should hit the market within two years.

“They were all outstanding companies, says Martin of all of the pitchers. “They are proof that Northeast Ohio is a hotbed for entrepreneurial activity and the more companies like these that choose to start and grow their companies here, the more the world sees it.”

[KnotProfit](#), a company that helps couples use their wedding registries to raise money for charity, won \$5,000.

Meanwhile, members of JumpStart’s venture partners team advised attendees on “What You Need to Know to Scaleup Your Startup.” Wendy Jarchow, Sally Shriner and Jeremy Quinn each spoke about raising capital, sales and recruiting before meeting one-on-one for over an hour with small business owners in scaleup mode. “That is what we were looking for with this event – true engagement,” says Martin of the personal sessions. “We didn’t want to simply give speeches and lecture – we wanted to engage in meaningful discussions with people who are interested in or are already starting or growing a business.”

“Make sure you have a comprehensive business plan,” advised Jarchow. “For scaleups looking for investors, think about debt or equity.”

Shriner told listeners to consider a variety of sales models as their businesses grow. “The first customer feels like the biggest deal in the world until you realize it’s just the first customer,” she said.

Quinn went over five things overlooked by startups as they grow and hire: Talent and planning; the importance of creating position profiles with job descriptions; recruiting and talent attraction; onboarding; and employee retention.

“You want to think about what it feels like when you started a new job,” Quinn said of onboarding. “There are not really more stressful things than taking on a new job. Put some time into [onboarding] and map it out for the first 30 days.”

Other popular events throughout the day included a Marketing and Ice Cream Social at [Sweet Moses](#), at which marketing experts, networked with entrepreneurs while talking about branding, social media and websites. Martin reports the social was at full capacity throughout the day.



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SEA Change discussion with Rust Belt Riders, Upcycle Parts Shop and Modern Good at Luxe

At [Luxe Kitchen and Lounge](#), attendees learned about social enterprise accelerator [SEA Change](#) and heard from the organizations first group of investees and their work toward making a sustainable impact. “They were very engaging sessions and were very individualized,” says Martin of the Sweet Moses and Luxe events. “People were able to talk specifically about areas that interested them.”

The day ended on a relaxed note, with [TechPint](#) holding its networking-and-beer session at the [Happy Dog](#), and a gathering at [Stone Mad Pub](#) with past and present [FlashStarts](#) teams to discuss how startups and angles can align their interests.

As this was the first Startup Scaleup JumpStart hosted, Martin says they were a bit nervous about how it would go. But at the end of the day, she says she was pleased with it. “Our goal was to create an event that brought all the resources available to entrepreneurs together in one location so attendees could plan their day around sessions that can help them grow or scale their businesses,” she says. “I think we did just that. People were popping in and out of sessions and asking a lot of questions.”

Photos [Bob Perkowski](#)




Read more articles by [karin connelly](#). Karin Connelly enjoys telling people's stories, whether it's a promising startup or a life's passion. She has spent 15 years reporting on the local business community for publications such as Inside Business and Cleveland Magazine. She was editor of the Rocky River/Lakewood edition of In the Neighborhood and was a general assignment reporter and photographer for the Amherst News-Times. At Fresh Water she enjoys telling the stories of Clevelanders who are shaping and embracing the business and research climate in Cleveland.

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