



News release

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**Kenosha entrepreneur wins highest seed grant
in Launch Box business pitch contest**
Mount Pleasant business owner takes second

Kelly Kruse of Big Sky Design, Kenosha, won the Launch Box Accelerator program Dec. 13 in the auditorium of the SC Johnson integrated Manufacturing and Engineering Technology Center, 2320 Renaissance Blvd. and will receive a \$5,000 seed grant for her company.

Kruse's graphic design company specializes in customized wedding invitations and related products.

"The program showed me how to focus on what I need to be successful," said Kruse. "I think this could have been a side business, or even a hobby, for a while. Going through this process helped me to make it into an actual business."

With tools and skills gained through an intense, 12-week business mentoring program, entrepreneurs from nine companies competed for seed grants by making a 4-minute pitch to a panel of judges.

Miranda Rochol, owner of Lifebook Builder, LLC, Mount Pleasant, took second and will receive \$4,000 in seed grant money. Rochol's company focuses on providing an app and Web site for parents to build a child's Lifebook. The Lifebook is a way for a foster or adopted child to put information and items from

their birth and early years to be able to understand where they came from as they get older.

“I learned a lot from this, it helped me to reframe my focus,” said Rochol. “I had never built something from scratch in business. This gave me confidence that I was on the right track with my product.”

Two entrepreneurs tied for third place, and will each receive \$3,000 in seed grant money. They are:

- B’ssert, LLC, Rochelle Schmidt, Kenosha, offering gluten-free products.
- Wee Tinkers, Tonya Sims, Racine, providing an interactive doll to promote interest in science, technology, engineering and math to 4-to-8-year-old girls.

Sims said the accelerator required her to interview 100 potential customers, which prompted her to change the product model from a hand-held device to an interactive doll.

The remaining entrepreneurs will receive \$2,500 each. They are:

- CAH Promotions, Chad Hensiak and Amber Kolosso, Burlington, providing marketing and Web site design through a paid internship program, using students from local colleges.
- Covered Care, Donisha Nesbitt, Sturtevant, an in-home health care company.

- Liquid Code Studios, Douglas Beeson and Justice Aranda, Union Grove, a marketing and design company focused on helping small businesses with their Web site needs.
- Medscrub Inc., Anthony Talamonti, Kenosha, a company providing a wound cleaner product.
- Tasty DK's Catering, David Shabazz, Racine, featuring bar-b-cue.

The entrepreneurs are part of Gateway's Launch Box Accelerator Program, an effort to help them to start or grow their business. Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation in June awarded Gateway a grant to support the program.

The area entrepreneurs took part in the program to help them grow their business, such as working on revenue models, customer surveys, prototypes and working to make sure their business is profitable.

Launch Box hosted the accelerator program and offered such resources as prototyping at the Fab Lab housed at Gateway's SC Johnson iMET Center in Sturtevant, connecting with area entrepreneurs and providing business space at its facility.

For more information, please contact Thalia Mendez at (262) 898-7404.

Gateway Technical College collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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