

Lawrence entrepreneurs shine at Sandbox Pitch Contest

On September 13th, the Sandbox Entrepreneur Program held its third pitch contest at Chester's- Bell Tower Square in Lawrence, MA. The contest was focused on education, environment, and human services ideas. During the contest, eight selected finalists (of forty-seven applicants) squared off in front of five judges and over one-hundred audience members for over \$2,000 in cash prizes. All three of the winners either live or work in Lawrence.

Jessica Wilson, a resident of Lawrence, took home the first place prize of \$1000 for her "Videographer Startup Boost" idea. This service offers video and social media entrepreneurs training in videography, editing, social media services, customer service, and business development. This project is a partnership between the Lowell Telecommunications Corporation and the Merrimack Valley Small Business Center. Wilson noted that, "The experience was amazing. I'm ready to go back to work tomorrow and get started on this."

Nicolette Nordin Heavey, who works in Lawrence, won the second place prize of \$750 and the "Fan Favorite" award of \$500. Her idea, "Stories in the Streets", brings storytelling and books to families and children in various locations in Lawrence, including playgrounds, farmer's markets, and food bank lines.

Harlyene D. Goss, who also works

in Lawrence, was selected as the "Wild Card"--applicants who are not officially chosen to pitch have an opportunity to put their name and a hat. If their name is drawn, they will have the opportunity to pitch on the spot. She was awarded third place of \$500 for "Emergency Medical Info Kits." Her idea provides individual's emergency contact information and medical history data readily available in a magnetic vinyl envelope in case of a medical emergency.

During the contest, finalists received feedback about their ideas from a special panel of judges that included:

- Anita Worden: Chairwoman, Solectria Renewables—Lawrence based business
- Frank Carvalho: Executive Director, Mill Cities Community Investments
- Adam Baacke: Assistant City Manager, City of Lowell
- Jean Hammond: Angel Investor/Entrepreneur
- Nathan Rothstein: President, Project Repat

"I've been involved with the Sandbox since almost the beginning." Frank

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Tsongas Speaks at Lawrence Economic Development Conference

On Wednesday, September 19, Congresswoman Niki Tsongas addressed the MassDevelopment Economic Development Conference in Lawrence, discussing federal economic development initiatives and resources that have and can impact projects in the region.

"There are projects going on right here in the Fifth District that demonstrate a successful union between supporting economic development, protecting the environment and preserving our history and traditions," Tsongas said. "Effective projects begin with collaboration. Open communication allows for federal, state and local resources to work together, producing an economical and efficient roadmap for development projects. Massachusetts sites that sparked America's Industrial Revolution are now being retooled to create sustainable neighborhoods and workspaces for ourselves and for the next generation."

Two projects that have benefited from federal economic development resources are the Hamilton Canal District development in Lowell and the Lawrence Union Crossing Project.

Congresswoman Tsongas recently attended a ribbon-cutting for the Hamilton Canal Bridge, which received a \$2 million Economic Development Agency grant. The opening of the bridge is the most recent completed project in the redevelopment of Lowell's Hamilton Canal District, a



Congresswoman Tsongas speaking with Marty Jones, President and CEO of MassDevelopment.

project that has utilized federal resources to create nearly two million square feet for commercial, retail, and housing space, as well as hundreds of new jobs and an estimated \$400 million in tax revenue for the City.

Federal resources were also utilized in the development of Lawrence's Union Crossing, which recently opened. This project transformed a former textile mill along the Merrimack River into a mixed-use development that included family and workforce housing, commercial space and community facilities. Union Crossing has created an effective and innovative model for investing in older urban centers that combines best practices in both historic preservation and green building design to create a new neighborhood that is equitable, affordable and sustainable.

The Economic Development Conference was attended by local, state and federal public officials, stakeholders and economic development professionals

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Calvahlo noted, "I think it plays a vital role in bringing together different assets and resources in the community in order to help people that want to start a business to get the resources that they need to become successful."

The Sandbox Entrepreneur Program is a community wide initiative supporting entrepreneurship. It is supported by the Merrimack Valley Sandbox. More than 30 partner organizations and institutions are participating in this initiative including the City of Lawrence, the City of Lowell, the Merrimack Valley YMCA and Northern Essex Community College.

The initiative aims to give entrepreneurs a greater chance at success through pitch contests, workshops, and intensive programs. Between May and September of this year, the Sandbox Entrepreneur Program is holding a series of five pitch contests. Of the three pitch contests held so far, there have been over 100 applications, over 300 people in attendance, and \$6,000 in cash prizes given out. On October 4, 2012, there will be a pitch contest where all ideas will be welcome. The deadline to submit ideas to this contest is on Monday, September 17th at midnight. The pitch contest series will wrap up on October 18, 2012 where selected winners from all the contests will square off for \$10,000 in cash prizes.

Starting in December, the Sandbox Entrepreneur Program will be hosting a 12-week Mini-Accelerator for start-ups in the Merrimack Valley. This program will have mentors, workshops, and a space for entrepreneurs to work in. It will all lead to a business-plan competition with significant cash prizes.

For more information, please visit: MVSandbox.org

About the Merrimack Valley Sandbox:
The Merrimack Valley Sandbox is an initiative that strengthens the ecosystem in Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts around entrepreneurship and leadership. MVSandbox.org

About the Deshpande Foundation:
Gururaj (Desh) and Jaishree Deshpande have encouraged the use of entrepreneurship and innovation as catalysts for sustainable change in the United States, India and Canada since 1996. The Foundation supports organizations that strengthen local ecosystems, build leaders and entrepreneurs and catalyze innovative thinking, to accelerate creation of sustainable, scalable enterprises that have significant social or market impact. DeshpandeFoundation.org

About UMass Lowell:
UMass Lowell is a comprehensive, national research university located on a high-energy campus in the heart of a global community. The university offers its more than 15,000 students bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in business, engineering, education, fine arts, health and environment, humanities, liberal arts, sciences and social sciences. UMass Lowell delivers high-quality educational programs, vigorous hands-on learning and personal attention from leading faculty and staff, all of which prepare graduates to be ready for work, for life and for all the world offers. UML.edu



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Jessica Wilson pitches "Videographer Startup Boost"

Special Champions Pitch Contest! Winner's Showdown!

Winners from all four of our pitch contests will square off for \$10k!
Thursday, October 18
UMass Lowell Alumni Hall--Lowell
More details coming soon!



Third Annual **BRICKMAN TRIATHLON**

TRI-ING TOGETHER TO BUILD STRONG COMMUNITIES!

To benefit:




Merrimack Valley **Habitat for Humanity** the Merrimack Valley **YMCA**
Making healthier lives achievable for everyone.

Date: Sunday, September 30, 2012 8:00 AM

Sprint Distance: 250 yard pool swim/10 mile bike/3 mile run

Location: YMCA, 40 Lawrence Street, Lawrence, MA 01840

Entry: Maximum of 250 entrants (individual or teams of 2-3 people)
Register at the Lawrence YMCA or online at www.active.com
Online registration closes September 27th

Registration Fee: \$65 for individual, \$95 for team; Price increases on 8/1/12

Course Description: A great race to wind down your racing season or for your first triathlon. The swim will be a 250 yard serpentine course in the Lawrence YMCA pool. The bike will consist of 3 loops of a 3.4 mile bike route. The bike is a non-draft race and a CPSC-approved helmet is required. The run is 4.5 loops around the Campagnone Common providing many opportunities for your fans to cheer you on. Chip timing provided by New England Timing.

For more information, go to <http://www.active.com/triathlon/lawrence-ma/brickman-triathlon-2012>
For volunteer opportunities, email Gerry at brickmantri@comcast.net

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