

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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## **EDA Proud to Serve and Support the RISE 2017 Entrepreneurship Program**

**April 20, 2017, Front Royal, Virginia:** The Warren County Economic Development Authority is pleased to have served the RISE 2017 Program, whose Judge's Choice Entrepreneurship competition event took place on April 18<sup>th</sup> at The Corron Center resulting in a substantial award to a regional entrepreneur.

Seven small businesses from the Northern Shenandoah Valley attended six classes on marketing, finance, business plan development and sales pitch presentation. The classes were taught by local scholars from the Harry F. Byrd, Jr. School of Business at Shenandoah University and Lord Fairfax Community College and by seasoned local entrepreneurs and community leaders.

The classes are organized by the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center (who now serves as Lead Agency for the program) and are conducted at the Lord Fairfax Community College in Middletown, Virginia and offers remote learning centers in Luray, Virginia as well as Fauquier County, Virginia. The participating businesses this year represented Clarke County, Frederick County and Warren County, and included such diverse products and services as bistro, organic farm, sign-maker, logo designer, office machine supply and maintenance, moving company and fitness center. Not only did the participants receive classroom instruction on building a strategic plan, they also learned to write a business plan, create a sales pitch presentation and they were introduced to the resources of the Lord Fairfax Small Business Development Center, a department of the Virginia Small Business Administration.

Sponsorships were provided by local banks, local entrepreneurs, economic development agencies, news agencies and other regional organizations. Through the sponsorships, the program advisors were able to provide educational materials, host a community competition event as well as provide a \$5,000.00 cash purse to the winner for a product or service needed in order to move the business to the next level. In addition, in-kind services of memberships to regional Chambers of Commerce, promotions package and social media packages were offered – bringing the total value of the award to \$8,000.00+.

Once the classes were completed, participants entered into the semi-finals phase to qualify for competition in the Judges' Choice event. In early April, written business plans were delivered to a panel of judges (comprised of bankers and entrepreneurs) for evaluation and then the semi-finals pitch presentations were conducted before another panel of judges. Scores from that process determined the five finalists who would go on to compete for the Judges' Choice Award.

The final Public Pitch Presentation event was held on Tuesday, April 18, 2017, from 5:00pm until 8:00pm at The Corron Center, Lord Fairfax Community College Middletown Campus. Refreshments were provided and the public was invited in for a \$10 door fee which was then awarded to one of the contestants via audience vote as the People's Choice Award winner. This year's event attracted close to 100 people.

The finalists gave their Pitch Presentations before a panel of judges and that final score determined the winner of the RISE 2017 Judges' Choice Award. "All of the presenters were stellar," said Marla Taylor Jones, Director of Business Development at Warren County EDA and organizer/ advisor to the project. "They should all be extremely proud; I know we from the advisory team were!" Other RISE Advisors are: Christine Kriz, Director of the LFSBDC and Karen Helm, Program Manager, LFSBDC.

The winner this year was Ali Haney of Shenandoah Seasonal, an organic farmer in Clarke County, Virginia, who swept both the People's Choice and the Judges' Choice Awards. "Today we are grateful," she reported on her facebook page, "grateful for the outstanding and supportive community we live in, for the opportunity to grow our small business and for our amazing moral support squad."

Haney went on to say, " The \$5,000 ++ we won through the RISE program ... will be life changing for us and we are excited for the next chapter of opening a farm store at Shenandoah Seasonal this summer!"



*Ali Haney (second from left) and her husband, Dan Haney (fifth from the left) of Shenandoah Seasonal.*

**The RISE Program Participants, 2017:**



Milissa Marshall: **Brag Swag** creates original designs for high-quality apparel and gear, and offers custom and semi-custom designs for businesses, groups, or events.



Dian DiPasquale: **Front Royal Premier Copiers** provides service, sales, repair, maintenance and supplies for office equipment needs. They are a Dealer and Authorized Service Center for several product lines, and provide service and supplies on most major brands.



Jon Eye: **Mover Dudes Inc.** specialize in local and long distance moving and storage. As innovative leaders, Mover Dudes creates a strong, educated, and fulfilled workforce.



Shae Parker: **Shae Signs** designs and produces a wide variety of signs and marketing materials for business and residential application.





Ali Haney: **Shenandoah Seasonal** is a family farm growing four seasons of high-quality, organic food. Located at the intersection of Rt. 50 and 340 in Boyce, they offer a variety of produce to the community.



Rob Campbell: **Sherando Family Fitness** is a 24-hour gym focusing on personal wellness and offering onsite daycare, massage therapy, chiropractic services, exercise classes, and personal trainers for the whole family.



Craig Laird: **The Vine and Leaf** is an artisan café located in Downtown Front Royal. The Vine & Leaf offers wine and bistro food. They feature panini and grilled cheese sandwiches, freshly-made salads, and savory soups.



“I want to extend my thanks to each of you for all you did to help me and for all the hard work and dedication you put into the RISE program,” said Milissa Marshall of *Brag Swag*. “I wasn’t sure what to expect going in, but I’m truly glad I decided to participate. It was such a beneficial experience and I would highly recommend it to any entrepreneur looking to grow professionally and personally.”

“This is an important program and I’m delighted to be involved,” *Marilyn Finnemore*, owner of *The Bright Box*, Winchester, Virginia and Title Sponsor of the RISE 2017 Program.

“Building a system for supporting our entrepreneurial, small business community has been on our radar for a long time. We’re so glad to be a part of this terrific emerging program,” said Jennifer McDonald, Executive Director of the EDA.

**RISE Program Advisors:**

Christine Kriz, Director, LFSBDC (Lead Agency for RISE Program)

Karen Helm, Program Manager, LFSBDC

Marla Taylor Jones, Director of Business Development, Warren County EDA

**RISE Program Sponsors:**

The Bright Box, Title Sponsor

City National Bank, Patron Sponsor

Dish/Via Satellite, Patron Sponsor

First Bank, Patron Sponsor

Frederick County EDA, Patron Sponsor

Northern Virginia Daily, Patron Sponsor

Q102 iHeart Media, Patron Sponsor

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Web Strategies, Mentor Sponsor

**RISE Community Partners:**

Front Royal Warren County Chamber of Commerce

Top of Virginia Chamber of Commerce

Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce

Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission

**RISE Program Instructors:**

Darla Guevremont, Entrepreneur + Executive Director, BRAR

Mike Guevremont, Entrepreneur

Charles Harbaugh, Mayor of Middletown, Professor, LFCC

Christine Kriz, Director, LFSBDC

Dale Maza, Senior Counselor, LFSBDC

Anita Shull, President, Prosperity Group, LLC

Scott Spriggs, Director of Marketing, Shenandoah University

Montressa Washington, Professor of Entrepreneurship, Shenandoah University

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