



Media Release



Founders Choice Award Finalists Announced

Celebrating Entrepreneurship in Muskoka

The Muskoka Founders Circle, a group of Muskoka business leaders dedicated to economic development in Muskoka, is pleased to announce the five finalists for the 2018 Founders Choice Award. The award is a \$10,000 prize given to the Muskoka-based entrepreneur with the most promising start-up business, or idea for a new business.

The 5 finalists are:

- Kim Aitken, Aitken Frame Homes
- Brad Anderson, SurfSkateFly
- Collette Lalonde, Lettie's Plant-Based Cheese
- Kristi MacDonald, Beebagz
- Tim Webb and Dave Campbell, Shipyards Muskoka Marketplace

The finalists were chosen from a group of over thirty entrants to the competition. The top ten entrants presented their business plans to a panel of Founders at the Gravenhurst Opera House on February 27th. The five finalists were selected from that group.

“We were pleasantly surprised by both the quantity and quality of the contest entrants”, said Rick Dalmazzi, Executive Chair of Muskoka Founders Circle. “Our group is excited by the opportunity to help these inspiring individuals who are pursuing their passion.”

Aitken Frame Homes is Canada’s first “winter build” home construction company, using a proprietary new build method to deliver affordable homes at half the cost of traditional build methods.

SurfSkateFly produces innovative sports equipment for thrill seekers, including their Aquasurf line of jet-powered surfboards.

Lettie’s Plant-Based Cheese addresses the growing demand for tasty, fresh and local non-dairy products. The company’s vegan cheese is a nut based alternative to dairy cheese.

Beebagz is out to rid the world of environmentally unfriendly plastic bags. Its food-safe cotton baggies are coated with beeswax, tree resin and jojoba oil, and feature a proprietary waterproof seam.



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Shipyards Muskoka Marketplace is a specialty retail facility aiming to transform the Gravenhurst Wharf into a vibrant centre of shopping and entertainment activity for Muskoka residents and tourists.

The inaugural presentation of the Muskoka Founders Choice Award will take place on March 22nd, 2018 at the Impact Awards gala dinner event, where the winner will be revealed and presented with a cheque for \$10,000. The event is will also host the Parry Sound Muskoka Community Network (PMCN) Innovation Awards. The dinner gala is open to the public and will be held at the JW Marriott The Rosseau resort in Minnet starting at 6:00 p.m.

Tickets to the “red carpet” dinner and awards gala can be purchased for \$75 at any Scotiabank branch in Muskoka. Scotiabank is a sponsor of the event and will provide matching funds to support Founders Circle and PMCN. Tickets can also be purchased online for \$100 at www.iawards.ca beginning on March 7th.

The Impact Awards dinner gala will feature: a red carpet to showcase contest finalists; a cocktails & hors d’oeuvres reception; a multi-course gourmet meal; Oscars-style video vignettes of all contest finalists; and live award presentations to the winners.

“Entrepreneurism and Innovation are alive and well in Muskoka”, said Stuart Morley, Executive Director, Muskoka Community Network. “We’re proud of the Impact Awards and honoured to be recognizing the extraordinary talent and determination demonstrated by all the finalists”.

About Muskoka Founders Circle

Muskoka Founders Circle is a project of the Rotary Club of Gravenhurst and supported by the Rotary Clubs of Bracebridge and Bracebridge/Muskoka Lakes, as well as the Town of Gravenhurst and many Muskoka-based businesses, associations and business professionals. The goal of Founders Circle is to promote a positive working relationship between government, not-for-profits and businesses toward a common goal of making Muskoka a great place to do business.

About Parry Sound Muskoka Community Network

Parry Sound Muskoka Community Network’s (PMCN) mission is to create economic value by building information and communication technology (ICT) capacity through community partnerships. Its vision is a network of innovative communities focused on job creation and economic development in the broadband economy.