



***For Immediate Release***

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## **SMARTstart Celebrates 2016 Participants**

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – Twenty-one local entrepreneurs representing 17 businesses were celebrated on Thursday, November 3 at the 2016 SMARTstart Program Celebration Event.

The entrepreneurs spent the last eight months refining their idea for a new business or working to strengthen their existing business through the made-in-Airdrie SMARTstart entrepreneurial training program.

"It was a pleasure to honour the achievements of this year's participants," says Lorna Hunt, SMARTstart Committee Member and organizer of the event. "It was a true celebration of the entrepreneurs, mentors and sponsors who make this program possible. The support for SMARTstart is phenomenal and it's clear the whole community benefits when we set new businesses up for success."

The 2016 participants recognized at the event were:

- Ian Aman and Sasha Aman, Legacy Endurance
- Chris Armstrong and Olga Armstrong
- Jackie Astrom, Ecole Des Petits Amis French Immersion Preschool
- Michelle Carre, U Weight Loss
- Pat Denis, Omega Fire Protection
- Jackie Faber
- Harley Harper and Rian Levick, Ascension Float Centre
- Christelle Hitimana Uwamahoro, Healthy Meals Made Easy Inc.
- Annie Kelly and Jenny Pyykonen, The Alberta Dames
- Linet Kiplagat, Reliance Support Care & Services Inc.
- Beckie Lower, BL Fitness Coaching
- Shannon Marier, Koko FitClub
- Kaidy Morgan, Social Supper
- Lorne Osborne, Provision Athletics
- Peter Schill, Alberta Craft Malting
- Kim Straker, Atlasware Inc.
- Doug Wright

SMARTstart provided the participants with online business skills training, 11 in-person workshops delivered by Airdrie business experts, and a local mentor. Working with their mentor, each participant completed a business, strategic or feasibility plan by the end of the program.

"I am leaving the program knowing that my passion is not just a dream," said 2016 participant Christelle Hitimana Uwamahoro, owner of Healthy Meals Made Easy, at the Celebration Event. "With this program my life and my family's life has changed forever."

The event was also an opportunity to celebrate the 15 local businesspeople who volunteer their time to be SMARTstart mentors.

- Lorelei Talbot, Astoria Asset Management
- Jennifer Benner, Benner Database Designs
- Gary Armstrong, Empowered Employee Education
- Kerry Oswald, Smart Auto & Tirecraft
- Ron Farrell, Beneficial Insurance Services
- Brent Swain, Innovative Marketing Solutions
- Kelly Paisley, The I.T. Company
- Kari Lines, Budget Blinds
- Joan Bell, retired (former owner Airdrie Yoga)
- Sandi Christensen, Goodmen Roofing
- Sid Van der Meer, retired (former owner Northwest Equipment Ltd)
- Jacqui Jepson, The Pink Wand Cleaning Services

# SMARTstart

setting new businesses up for success

- Lynn Kehoe, Cream Body & Bath
- Jody Keller (former pharmacy owner)
- Danielle Coulter, The Tutor Doctor

The program is made possible with support from local sponsors including Title Sponsors Astoria Asset Management and BMO Kingsview Market. Media sponsors are airdrielife, Airdrie Echo, Here's the Scoop and Air 106.1FM. Entrepreneur sponsors are Airdrie Business Club, Beneficial Insurance, Padgett Business Services, Sid Van der Meer, Smart Auto & Tirecraft, The Pink Wand Cleaning Services and Think Airdrie Networking.

SMARTstart was launched in 2013 by the Airdrie Business Resource Partnership. It is an award-winning program delivered by Airdrie Chamber of Commerce, City of Airdrie Economic Development, Bow Valley College and Community Futures Centre West.

Applications for the 2017 program are open until December 18, 2016. Entrepreneurs with an idea or new businesses (in operation for less than three years) are invited to an information session on Tuesday, November 29 at 7 p.m. at the Airdrie Chamber of Commerce office, #102, 150 Edwards Way NW.

To learn more, visit [www.smartstartbusiness.ca](http://www.smartstartbusiness.ca) or e-mail [info@smartstartbusiness.ca](mailto:info@smartstartbusiness.ca).



*The 2016 SMARTstart participants. Back (from left): Rian Levick, Peter Schill, Jackie Astrom, Shannon Marier, Lorne Osborne, Sasha Aman, Ian Aman, Chris Armstrong, Michelle Carre. Front (from left): Pat Denis, Beckie Lower, Linet Kiplagat, Christelle Hitimana Uwamahoro, Kaidy Morgan. Missing: Olga Armstrong, Harley Harper, Annie Kelly, Jenny Pyykonen, Jackie Faber, Doug Wright and Kim Straker.*

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