



For Immediate Release

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SMARTstart Launches 2016 Program

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – The 2016 SMARTstart entrepreneurial training program officially launched last night with an enthusiastic group of local entrepreneurs and mentors.

“It was a fantastic launch event,” says Sara Chamberlain, SMARTstart Entrepreneur Coordinator and Organizing Committee Member. “This is the third year of the program and with each new group of entrepreneurs we see unique businesses and interesting challenges and opportunities. We’re very excited about where these entrepreneurs will be in eight months when they complete the program.”

Twenty-two entrepreneurs, representing 17 businesses, have been accepted into this year’s program. According to Chamberlain, the program was in high demand and received more than 30 applications for the available spots.

The 2016 entrepreneurs participating in the program include:

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

Over the course of eight months, the entrepreneurs will complete the *100 Essential Business Skills* online training from GoForth Institute, participate in 11 in-person workshops, and work with a mentor on the completion of a business, feasibility or strategic plan.

“Mentorship is a very important component of the program. We’re very appreciative of the local business people who have stepped up to volunteer their time to be mentors. We truly couldn’t do it without them,” says Jodie Eckert, SMARTstart Mentor Coordinator and Organizing Committee Member.

The fifteen local business leaders volunteering as mentors are:

- 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

SMARTstart

setting new businesses up for success

- Kelly Paisley, The I.T. Company
- Kari Lines, Budget Blinds
- Joan Bell, retired (former owner of Airdrie Yoga Studio)
- Sandi Christensen, Goodmen Roofing
- Sid Van der Meer, retired (former owner Northwest Equipment Ltd)
- Jacqui Jepson, The Pink Wand Cleaning Services Ltd.
- Lynn Kehoe, Cream Body & Bath
- Jody Keller, Carstairs and Didsbury Pharmasave
- Danielle Coulter, The Tutor Doctor

The Launch Event was held February 29 at Airdrie's Hampton Inn & Suites. The 2016 participants, mentors and sponsors were introduced. While mentors and entrepreneurs met in a speed networking activity, guests had the chance to hear from a former SMARTstart participant. Megan Lockhart, owner of Hello Life Studio, completed the SMARTstart program in 2014. She and husband, Darren, talked about the importance of working together as a family in supporting an entrepreneur's journey.

SMARTstart was launched in 2013. It was designed and is delivered by the Airdrie Business Resource Partnership which includes Airdrie Chamber of Commerce, City of Airdrie Economic Development, Bow Valley College and Community Futures Centre West.

The program is made possible with support from the following local sponsors:

- Title Sponsors: Astoria Asset Management and BMO Bank of Montreal Kingsview Market
- Entrepreneur Sponsors: Airdrie Business Club, Beneficial Insurance Services, Padgett Business Services, Smart Auto & Tirecraft, The Pink Wand Cleaning Services, Think Airdrie Networking, and Sid Van der Meer.
- Media sponsors: Air 106.1FM, airdrielife, Airdrie Echo, and Here's the Scoop.



Megan Lockhart, owner of Hello Life Studio, sharing her entrepreneurial journey with guests. Megan completed the SMARTstart program in 2014.



SMARTstart mentor Gary Armstrong, owner of Empowered Employee Education, meeting with a 2016 entrepreneur during the speed networking session.

To learn more, visit www.smartstartbusiness.ca or e-mail info@smartstartbusiness.ca.

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