



**For Immediate Release:** November 1, 2019

## **SMARTstart Program Celebrates 2019 Entrepreneurs**

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – Fourteen- up-and-coming local entrepreneurs representing 13 businesses were celebrated on Wednesday, October 30 at the 2019 SMARTstart Program Celebration event in Airdrie.

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.

"This is the sixth year the program has been offered in Airdrie and each year we are blown away by the amazing progress made by our entrepreneurs over the course of eight months," says Tara Levick, SMARTstart Organizing Committee Member. "The Celebration Event is truly a celebration of all the hard work made throughout the year. Everyone gets something different from SMARTstart and that's what makes the program so special."

The 2019 participants recognized at the event were:

- Chris Lindsey, Leaps N Bounds Inflatables
- Chrissie Rozak, GetintheLoop Airdrie
- Cigdem Fareed, Distinct Graphics & Software Solutions
- Colin Bailey, Evolution Performance
- Danielle Doetzel, Boulevard Home Inc.
- Kitty Bexson, Things by Kitty
- Lindsey Coyle, Airdrie Exchange
- Marla Elms, Grounded Natural Cleaning Services
- Morgan Sylvain & Kayla McPhail, Smile & Co
- Nick Davies, Cowork Space/Cocktail Lounge
- Moonliza Menya, Kirabo Fashion & Interiors
- Scott Jones, DigiWave Services
- Tara Reid, Re'Ferbish Group

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.

The event was also an opportunity to celebrate 14 local businesspeople who volunteer their time to be SMARTstart mentors. One mentor was honoured for volunteering for five years, since the program's inception in 2014. Congratulations to Kari Lines of Budget Blinds Airdrie and thank you for your continued support of the program.

SMARTstart was launched in 2014 and is an award-winning program delivered by the City of Airdrie Economic Development and Community Futures Centre West. SMARTstart has now provided training to 89 entrepreneurs and has helped a dozen new businesses open.

"One of the best things about SMARTstart is the people. From my mentor Tracy, the other entrepreneurs and mentors, to the program directors," says Marla Elms, 2019 entrepreneur. "It's so great to know that I've made lifelong connections and that I have a whole group of awesome people rooting for my success. To the people who work so hard to make SMARTstart happen: you are amazing, you are changing lives and I thank you for changing mine."

The program is made possible with support from local sponsors:

- Seminar Sponsors: BDC, MNP Airdrie

# SMARTstart

setting new businesses up for success

- Entrepreneur Sponsors: Airdrie Women in Business Association, McKee Homes, Sid Van der Meer, Blessingways Family Wellness
- Friend Sponsors: Ecole Des Petits Amis, Edward Jones-Derek Lalonde, Kerry Oswald
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Applications for the 2020 program are open until December 13, 2019. Entrepreneurs with an idea or new businesses (in operation for less than three years) are invited to learn more at information sessions on November 6 or December 4 at 7 p.m. or November 20 at 12 p.m. at City Hall (400 Main St SE).

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



*The 2019 SMARTstart participants.*

*Back Row (from left): Danielle Doetzel, Lindsey Coyle, Nick Davies, Scott Jones, Moonliza Menya*

*Front Row (from left): Morgan Sylvain, Kitty Bexson, Cigdem Fareed, Tara Reid, Chris Lindsey, Kayla McPhail, Marla Elms*

*Missing: Chrissie Rozak and Colin Bailey*

*Photo Credit: Kristy Reimer Photography*

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Contact:

Tara Levick, SMARTstart Committee  
City of Airdrie Economic Development  
Phone: 403.948.8800 x 8481  
E-mail: [tara.levick@airdrie.ca](mailto:tara.levick@airdrie.ca)