



**For Immediate Release:** November 3, 2020

## **SMARTstart Program Celebrates 2020 Entrepreneurs**

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – Twelve-up-and-coming local entrepreneurs representing 11 businesses were celebrated on Wednesday, October 28 at the 2020 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.

"The only word for this group of graduates is resilient," says Tara Levick, SMARTstart Organizing Committee Member. "This group of entrepreneurs had only met in person twice before the pandemic hit in March. As we quickly pivoted SMARTstart to a virtual format and this year's group stuck by us with poise and grace. The Celebration Event was truly a celebration of all the hard work made throughout the year."

The 2020 participants recognized at the event were:

- Danny and Kimberly Goring – GT Promotions
- Rebecca McElhinney – Lotus Reproductive Health and Fertility
- Tamara Wheeler – Becoming Boundless Mediation Studio
- Tannis Smith – Community Art Space
- Sergey Buryachenko – B-Vigilant
- Tami Crawford – Just Flip It!
- Tendai Dongo – Children's Empowerment Workshops
- Jodi McFarlane – Alberta Ortho & Dental Sharpening Inc.
- Stephanie Rabel – Oh Snap Photo Camper
- Patty Duggan – Funky Petals
- Joni Daley – Rival Axe Throwing

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 16 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 Kelly Paisley of the IT Company 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 over 115 entrepreneurs and has helped a dozen new businesses open.

"Some may think that this was the toughest year to be in the SMARTstart program, although for us it could not have been at a better time," says Joni Daley, 2020 entrepreneur. "At the beginning of the year, I chose the word "Victory" to be my focus. There have been many challenges and obstacles to overcome and with the incredible team in the SMARTstart program and our mentors, this year's entrepreneurs have shown true grit and the tenacity to never give up. We are so thankful for everything; it is a year of Victory!"

# SMARTstart

setting new businesses up for success

The program is made possible with support from local sponsors:

- Seminar Sponsors: BDC, MNP Airdrie
- Entrepreneur Sponsors: Sid Van der Meer, Blessingways Family Wellness, Beckie Lower, MJ McClain Accounting
- Friend Sponsors: Ecole Des Petits Amis
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Applications for the 2021 program are open until December 16, 2020. Entrepreneurs with an idea or new businesses (in operation for less than three years) are invited to learn more at one of the virtual information sessions happening on November 3 at 12 p.m. or November 24 at 7 p.m.

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



*The 2020 SMARTstart participants.*

*From left: Danny Goring, Rebecca McElhinney, Stephanie Rabel, Tami Crawford, Jodi McFarlane, Patty Duggan, Tendai Dongo, Joni Daley, Sergey Buryachenko  
Missing: Tamara Wheeler and Tannis Smith*

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