



***For Immediate Release***

February 26, 2020

## **SMARTstart Launches 2020 Program**

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA – The 2020 SMARTstart entrepreneurial training program officially launched Tuesday night with an enthusiastic and dynamic group of local entrepreneurs and mentors.

“The launch is one of my favourite events of the year,” says Tara Levick, SMARTstart Entrepreneur Coordinator and Organizing Committee Member. “With each new group of entrepreneurs we see a new set of unique businesses each with interesting challenges and opportunities. We’re very excited to see where these entrepreneurs will be in eight months when they complete the program.”

Launched in 2014, SMARTstart has assisted 103 local entrepreneurs with their new business or business idea. As a result 17 new businesses have opened their doors and 29 businesses have expanded their operations or services.

Fourteen entrepreneurs, representing 13 businesses, have been accepted into this year’s program.

**Entrepreneurs with an idea:**

- Jodi McFarlane, Alberta Ortho & Dental Sharpening Inc.
- Patricia Duggan, Funky Petal
- Rebecca McElhinney, Lotus Reproductive Health and Fertility
- Sergey Buryachenko, Cybersecurity Services for Businesses
- Stephanie Rabel, Oh Snap Photo Camper
- Tamara Wheeler, Becoming Boundless Meditation Studio
- Tami Crawford, Makers Studio/Coworking Space
- Tannis Smith, Community Art Space
- Tendai, Dongo, Children Empowerment Workshops

**New business owners (in operation less than 3 years):**

- Danny & Kimberly Goring , GT Promotions
- David DeNobrega, Snap! Collectables
- Joni Daley, Rival Axe Throwing Ltd.
- Shala Heger, The Little Blind Company Ltd.

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.

Mentors are volunteers from the Airdrie business community. The 17 local business leaders volunteering in 2020 are:

- Andrew Bennett, The I.T. Company
- Danielle Coulter, former owner Tutor Doctor
- Don Dixon, Cangos
- Heather Cowie, Airdrie Family Eye Doctors
- Heather Harke, Shoplift Deals Limited
- Jacqui Jepson, The Pink Wand Cleaning Services Ltd.

- Jennifer Benner, Benner Database Designs
- Joan Traub, Retired (Airdrie Yoga Studio)
- Jo-Anne Yau, Masuch Law
- Kelly Paisley, The I.T. Company
- Melanie Beingessner, Blessingways Family Wellness
- Michelle Carre, The Carre Group
- Nadine Woitt, Mezzanine Hair Studio
- Nancy Kelln, Unimagined Testing Inc. & Greenwood Rentals
- Sid Van der Meer, Retired (Northwest Equipment)
- Tracy Goodbrand, Irricana Kountry Kennel
- Wendy Bates, The Hair Lounge

“SMARTstart mentors tell us they get just as much from the program as the entrepreneurs,” says Jodie Eckert, SMARTstart Mentor Coordinator and Organizing Committee Member. “It reignites that creative enthusiasm they had when first starting their business.”

The Launch Event was held on February 25 at Woodside Golf Course where the 2020 participants, mentors and sponsors were introduced. A “speed connecting” session was held to provide the opportunity for program mentors and entrepreneurs to meet.

SMARTstart is an award-winning program delivered by the City of Airdrie Economic Development, Bow Valley College and Community Futures Centre West.

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

- Seminar Sponsors: BDC, MNP
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To learn more, visit [www.smartstartairdrie.ca](http://www.smartstartairdrie.ca)

*Photo 1 – Mentor Jennifer Benner and entrepreneur Tannis Smith meeting at the speed connecting session*

*Photo 2 – The group of mentors and entrepreneurs being welcomed by Mayor Peter Brown*

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