



***For Immediate Release***

March 2, 2021

**SMARTstart Launches 2021 Program**

AIRDRIE, ALBERTA –The 2021 SMARTstart entrepreneurial training program officially launched on February 25 with an enthusiastic and dynamic group of local entrepreneurs and mentors.

“This year, with COVID restrictions, the launch of SMARTstart looked a bit different as we had to hold it virtually, but it was still a hit!” says Tara Levick, SMARTstart Entrepreneur Coordinator and Organizing Committee Member. “Between the mentors and this new group of entrepreneurs, everyone was excited to connect and learn about each other. We’re very excited to watch these entrepreneurs go through the program and see where they will land in eight months when they complete the program.”

Launched in 2014, SMARTstart has assisted 115 local entrepreneurs with their new business or business ideas. As a result, 20 new businesses have opened their doors and 31 businesses have expanded their operations or services.

Ten entrepreneurs, representing eight businesses, have been accepted into this year’s program.

Entrepreneurs with an idea:

- Jen Berg and Elissa Breakenridge, Premier Parenting
- Kristen Harrison, Backyards & More
- Meagan and Scott Doerksen, Sustainable Hydroponics Farm
- Katie Downie, Kid Survival Kits

New business owners (in operation less than three years):

- Liz Holman, Little Sleep Coach
- Lilian Jourieh, Smashdoor Marketing Inc.
- Natasha Tiel, Tiel Virtual Solutions
- Sharon Borson, Royal Appliance Repair

Over the course of eight months, the entrepreneurs will complete the 100 Essential Business Skills online training from GoForth Institute, participate in 11 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 10 local business leaders volunteering in 2021 are:

- Dr. Melanie Beingessner, Blessingways Family Wellness
- Jennifer Benner, Benner Database Designs
- Andrew Bennett, The I.T. Company
- Michelle Carre, LochSmith Consulting
- Tracy Goodbrand, Irricana Kountry Kennel
- Heather Harke, Shoplift Deals Limited
- Kari Lines, Budget Blinds of Airdrie
- Joan Traub, former owner of Airdrie Yoga Studio
- Sid Van der Meer, former owner Northwest Equipment Ltd
- Jo-Anne Yau, Robertson LLP

“Despite the current challenging business environment, the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well. Our SMARTstart mentors are looking forward to supporting these new entrepreneurs in developing their business,” says Jodie Eckert, SMARTstart Mentor Coordinator and Organizing Committee Member. “They remember the difficult times and how much they appreciated the support they received. The mentors welcome the chance to pay it forward.”

The Launch Event was held virtually on February 25 where the 2021 participants and mentors were introduced. A virtual “speed connecting” session was held to provide the opportunity for program mentors and entrepreneurs to meet.

# SMARTstart

setting new businesses up for success

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

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To learn more, visit [www.smartstartairdrie.ca](http://www.smartstartairdrie.ca)

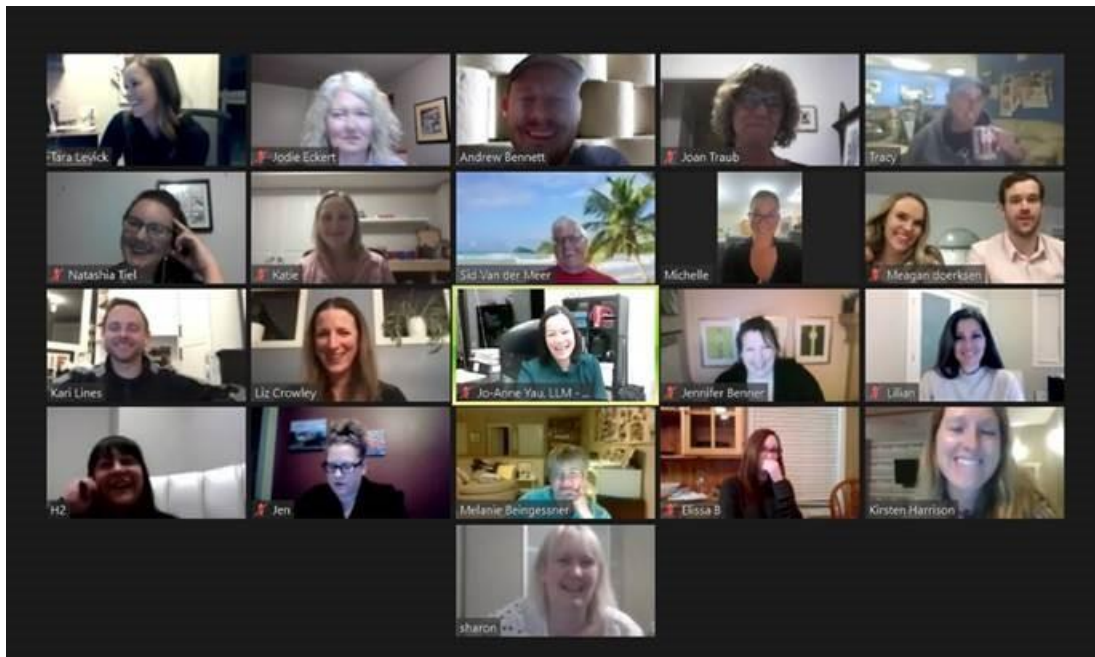


Photo 1 – Virtual Launch February 25, 2021

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