

USRC Celebrates Winners of 2024 Upper Shore STRT1UP Roadshow Pitch Competition

Chestertown, MD (May 09, 2024) - The [Upper Shore Regional Council \(USRC\)](#), in conjunction with [Startup Maryland](#), [Washington College](#), and [Maryland Technology Development Corporation \(TEDCO\)](#), hosted the 2024 Upper Shore STRT1UP Roadshow on April 9th at Washington College to kick off the Pitch Across Maryland tour. The event hosted selected applicants from Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties, each with innovative business ideas.

Pitch Across Maryland is an annual, multi-stop tour to uncover the undiscovered gems of entrepreneurship and innovation throughout Maryland.

"We were proud to be a sponsor of the Upper Shore STRT1UP Roadshow event this year," said Susan O'Neill, executive director of USRC. "It was wonderful to see the Economic Development offices in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's Counties team up for this event to inspire growth in the Upper Shore region of Maryland for years to come."

Pitches were judged on their clarity in identifying the applicant's idea and solution, its viability, regional impact, and innovation. A total of \$5,500 in cash prizes were awarded to the winner, [The Naked Embrace](#), and runner-up, [Beyond Words Tutoring](#), to help grow their ideas into reality.

The Naked Embrace, based in Cecil County, provides sustainable, all-natural, and healthy fragrance products for people and their homes. The business prides itself on maintaining environmentally friendly practices by utilizing reusable or biodegradable supplies, materials, and packaging to reduce waste.

Providing cutting-edge educational services to students of all abilities, Beyond Words Tutoring, located in Queen Anne's County, is a children's education advocate and ensures that the needs of young learners are recognized and met with appropriate accommodations and resources. Knowing students learn best in environments tailored to their unique needs and skills, Beyond Words Tutoring constructed small group settings that offer all students the ability to lean into their natural curiosities.

"The Ecosystem of Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Maryland is very vibrant in both rural and urban areas. So many doers with ideas that are just waiting to come to life but many don't know how or where to start," shared Michael Binko, Founder and Managing Partner, STRT1UP Ventures | Startup Maryland. "STRT1UP Ventures as a part of Startup Maryland recognizes that supporting entrepreneurs through their various lifecycle stages is one of the best ways to foster a community of innovation. We do that through celebration, coaching, curation, and capital. The STRT1UP Roadshow is a Celebration during which we criss-cross Maryland for 9 months to put the mic in the hands of founders for a video pitch on the tour bus while also shining the spotlight on Ecosystems of Support who are leaning in on their founders. The Upper Shore Region roadshow tour stops demonstrated the pillar tenets of Ecosystem with multiple organizations across categories working together to nurture these opportunities. The pitch competition gives

entrepreneurs and start-up companies a chance to share their ideas, adjust and improve where necessary, and align with available resources all with the outcome of making their dream a reality.”

“For start-ups and businesses looking to get their feet off the ground, a pitch competition can be crucial,” said Caddie Putnam Rankin, Department Chair and Associate Professor of Business Management at Washington College. “The process of planning, organizing, funding, and leveraging opportunities for a business can often seem intimidating. Washington College was thrilled to host the first stop of the annual tour to support the ideas, goals, and objectives of local emerging businesses.”

In addition to the competitive pitch competition, applicants had the opportunity to network with other innovators and business resource partners offering information on business financing and support.

To learn more about the USRC and the projects energizing the Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne’s communities visit <https://usrcmd.org/>.

About the Upper Shore Regional Council: Since 2003, the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC) has fostered planning and development in Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne’s counties. USRC affords federal, state, county, and local governments a regional forum to identify issues and opportunities. USRC plans and implements programs to improve the quality of life in the Upper Shore Region of Maryland.

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IMAGES FROM THE EVENT:



From Left: Janice Palmer, Upper Shore Regional Council; Sandra Edwards, Cecil County Economic Development; Rebecca Clark, Queen Anne's County Economic Development; Alyssa Webster, The Naked Embrace; Susan O'Neill, Upper Shore Regional Council; Jamie Williams, Kent County Economic Development (photo provided by the Upper Shore Regional Council)



From Left: Janice Palmer, Upper Shore Regional Council; Sandra Edwards, Cecil County Economic Development; Rebecca Clark, Queen Anne's County Economic Development; Lindsey Parte, Beyond Words Tutoring; Susan O'Neill, Upper Shore Regional Council; Jamie Williams, Kent County Economic Development (photo provided by the Upper Shore Regional Council)

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