



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Noki Farms receives \$20,000 at Win This Space business pitch competition

More than \$40,000 in cash and in-kind prizes awarded to Guelph-Wellington entrepreneurs

April 14, 2021 (Guelph, ON) – Noki Farms, a farm meets deli counter retail space, received first place and \$20,000 at the Business Centre Guelph-Wellington's first Win This Space business pitch competition, in partnership with Downtown Guelph Business Association and Invest Guelph.

Founded by biotechnology technicians Nykole Crevits and Karl Fellbaum, **Noki Farms will offer harvest-on-demand specialty mushrooms, leafy greens, microgreens, edible flowers, and fresh herbs at an upcoming space located in downtown Guelph.**

"This is a huge vote of confidence to make it this far alongside fantastic competitors," said Fellbaum, upon learning that Noki Farms had been selected as the competition winner. "You can't do anything in this world without help, and we're grateful for the business coaching from the BCGW and support of the DGBA and Invest in Guelph. Mushrooms for everyone!"

Noki Farms owners Crevits and Fellbaum plan to use the \$20,000 cash prize to support early marketing efforts, purchase lab equipment and create the controlled environment required to grow their mushrooms, greens and herbs. Noki Farms also received a \$750 commercial space design from sponsor Centre Staged Designs Inc.; branding, signage and digital marketing support from sponsor 2H Media; six months of business banking services from BMO Bank of Montréal and one year of ongoing business development and advisory services from the Business Centre Guelph-Wellington (BCGW).

The company was one of three local businesses that competed for more than \$40,000 in cash and awards in a virtual business pitch event on April 13. The event was the culmination of nearly three months of business development, training and coaching for the participants, and was well attended by more than 60 community members, entrepreneurs and competition partners.

Second prize was awarded to Fan/Joy Culinary, Counselling & Training Academy, a culinary social enterprise that offers cooking and counselling programs to improve the physical and mental health of youth and their families. Founder and chef Pam Fanjoy gave an engaging pitch that resulted in a \$7,500 cash prize from Invest in Guelph to expand her existing operation, as well as branding, signage and digital marketing support from 2H Media; six months of business banking services from BMO Bank of Montréal and one year of ongoing business development and advisory services from the Business Centre Guelph-Wellington (BCGW).

Third prize was awarded to Amber Ozols Art, a creative studio that offers large-scale murals, art, and paper and stationary goods through the HomeBody product line. Artist Amber Ozols secured a space in the BCGW's Starter Company Plus business development program this spring and a \$5,000 grant, as well as branding and marketing support from 2H Media, and six months of business banking services from BMO Bank of Montréal.

Ozols was also selected as the recipient of the Jan Hawley People's Choice Award through an in-real-time audience poll. Award funds were gathered from registration donations and the award is named in honour of Win This Space initiative creator Jan Hawley, who was economic development officer for Huron East until her recent passing.

"The Win This Space competition has been more than a year in the making, and it would not have been possible without the partnership of the Downtown Guelph Business Association and Invest in Guelph," said Kristel Manes, Executive Director of the BCGW. "We are so proud of the finalists for taking advantage of this incredible opportunity in our current economic climate, to challenge themselves and grow their businesses, while contributing to the vitality of our city."

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Judges for last night's competition included Marty Williams, Executive Director of the Downtown Guelph Business Association; Gillian Cuthbert, Senior Relationship Manager Business Banking, BMO Bank of Montréal; Christine Chapman, Manager of Economic Development, City of Guelph; and Jenny Hilborn, Owner and Lead Designer of Centre Staged Inc.

"We think all three entrepreneurs have businesses that our commercial landlords will be interested in, and we know there are spaces to fit each of them," said Marty Williams, Executive Director of the Downtown Guelph Business Association. "We're excited to set up connections so the founders can press on with these innovative ideas and add something new to downtown Guelph."

The three finalists were selected from 22 applicants in Guelph and Wellington County received earlier this year. Funding for the cash awards was provided by the BCGW, DGBA and Invest in Guelph. All finalists participated in six weeks of business development training and were selected through a qualifying pitch in March judged by BCGW business advisors.

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About Business Centre Guelph-Wellington

Business Centre Guelph-Wellington is a not for profit organization that has been helping entrepreneurs, business owners, professionals and students achieve business success since 1999. For nearly 20 years, we have added to the wealth and the diversity of our business community, one entrepreneur at a time.

About Downtown Guelph Business Association

The Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA) is a Business Improvement Area (BIA) with over 500 business and property owners as members. It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors who are appointed by Guelph City Council. Created in 1972, the DGBA is one of the oldest BIAs in Ontario. For more information, please visit downtownguelph.com.

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