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Perennial Bloom, Sassy Girl Soaps Win Fourth Annual Launch Rural Nevada

GOED supporting rural Nevada at events in Elko, Ely with staff representation and panel leadership

CARSON CITY, Nev. – For the fourth year running, contestants from all over Nevada descended upon Elko both in person and virtually to participate in the Launch Rural Nevada small business and entrepreneur pitch competition on November 3rd. Out of the seven competitors vying for a portion of the \$15,000 in prize money, four were 17 years old or under. Here are the results from the two categories:

Adult

- Deseret Blake, Perennial Bloom from West Wendover, won first place in the adult category, along with People's Choice.
- Brandolyn Thran, MicroLife Outdoor Experiences, from Elko, was second.
- Bobby Christy, Hustle Partners, from Fernley finished third.

Youth

- Avery Safford, Sassy Girl Soaps from Wells finished first.
- Shaylin Lytle, Lytle Art, from Alamo finished second.
- Melanie Beardall, Beardall's Sensations, from Wells, finished third.
- Blair Black, Blair Black Firewood from Crescent Valley, finished fourth.

“The competition was originally developed and deployed out of the Governor’s Office of Economic Development,” said Sheldon Mudd, Director of the Northeastern Nevada Development Authority. “We took it over in 2022 because our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy highlighted the need for small business funding and entrepreneurial empowerment.”

Mudd's team spearheaded an effort to raise money for this year's competition and was able to secure sponsorships from Nevada Gold Mines, Orla Mining, Nevada Small Business Development Center, Great Basin College, UNR Osmen Center for Entrepreneurship, NV Energy, Northern Nevada Development Authority, Southwest Gas, StartUp Nevada, Nevada State Development Corporation, Empire CAT, Southwest Central Regional Economic Development Authority, Mt. Wheeler Power, Re: Sales, and GOED.

GOED led a panel of four startups all of which were portfolio companies of its State Venture Capital Program, Battle Born Venture part of the [Nevada SSBCI Program](#). The panelists made up of founders representing a wide range of industries, including two catering to a rural and outdoor Nevada lifestyle, included [Outlaw Soaps](#), [Hibear](#), [Let's Rolo](#), and [CircleIn](#).

"This was a tremendous opportunity for our portfolio of companies to share their startup journeys with rural founders," said Karsten Heise, Senior Director of Strategic Program & Innovation, who moderated the panel in Elko. "Especially their advice on how to reach customers and build their businesses during startup-typical challenging times, which demonstrated to rural entrepreneurs that they too can create and scale their startups."

The cast of competitors represented a great cross-section from around the Silver State. In the youth division, sponsored by Nevada Gold Mines, three contestants offered up a variety of goods and services. Blair Black of Crescent Valley and an 8th grader at Battle Mountain middle school pitched his business model that focused on firewood cutting, extraction, and delivery while Shaylin Lytle of Alamo presented her wide array of artistic wares guaranteed to add a little color and fun to any setting. Wells offered up two youth contestants, Melanie Beardall who dazzled the crowd with her traditional and gluten free confections and 2023 LRN winner, Avery Safford who presented a collection of sweet-smelling organic soaps.

The adult division, sponsored by the Nevada State Development Corporation was no less exciting. Dr. Brandolyn Thran of Elko kicked off the event with a pitch highlighting her MicroLife Outdoor Experiences designed to connect individuals with nature to enhance overall physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Robert Christy of Hustle Partners based in Fernley presented a new approach to work force development through their modified employee placement program. The big winner of this year's Launch Rural Nevada competition and Audience Choice award was Deseret Blake of West Wendover who introduced the statewide audience to "Perennial Bloom" a wedding dress repurposing business that specializes in turning wedding dresses into heirloom items that can continue to be utilized well into the future.

“Too many times, rural Nevadans rely on ‘outsiders’ to improve upon or change our economic environment; hoping that they will come in and invest in our communities and provide more variety or opportunity,” Mudd said. “We’ve got to get away from this general mindset. Yes, our organization and its member communities will continue to try to make Northeastern Nevada a great place to do business, hopefully making it attractive to those within and beyond Nevada’s borders but if we’re going to improve upon our lot, we must take the initiative ourselves and come to the realization that no one is coming to save us.”

Mudd said the goal of events such as Launch Rural Nevada is to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem that encourages and supports small business development from within their own ranks building off of a long-standing tradition of self-sufficiency and rugged individualism.

To further strengthen GOED support for rural Nevada, its newly established Office of Entrepreneurship participated in an invigorating Rural Women's Leadership Summit and Small Business Resource Expo that honored all those resources and efforts that make White Pine County a robust economic hub. Catering to an enormous catchment in eastern Nevada, women of excellence were championed in agriculture, education, entrepreneurship, government, tourism, mining, and leadership.

"In locations often stretched thin by supply versus demand, communities have to be this resourceful," said Kyeema Peart, Director of the Office of Entrepreneurship at GOED. "White Pine candidates and community members shine and show how Ely and its neighbors are on the map for a reason. Come see for yourself."

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About the Governor’s Office of Economic Development

Created during the 2011 session of the Nevada Legislature, the [Governor’s Office of Economic Development](#) is the result of a collaborative effort between the Nevada Legislature and the Governor’s Office to restructure economic development in the state. GOED’s role is to promote a robust, diversified and prosperous economy in Nevada, to stimulate business expansion and retention, encourage entrepreneurial enterprise, attract new businesses and facilitate community development.