                            MEDIA ADVISORY

**Eastern Pennsylvania District**

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**SBA Officials visit Eastern Pennsylvania’s 2022 Entrepreneurial Success of the Year**

## Soltech Solutions, LLC to be presented with award May 4

**BETHLEHEM, Pa. –** The U.S. Small Business Administration’s Eastern Pennsylvania District Office announces Soltech Solutions, LLC, located in Bethlehem, as the recipient of its Eastern Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Success of the Year Award for 2022. **Media are invited to attend and will have opportunities for interviews and photos.**

**WHO:** Steve Dixel, District Director, SBA Eastern Pennsylvania District Office

 Michael Kane, Deputy District Director, SBA Eastern Pennsylvania District Office

 Paul Hodges, Cofounder, Soltech Solutions, LLC

 Michael Planer, Cofounder, Soltech Solutions, LLC

 Chris Clark, Cofounder, Soltech Solutions, LLC

 The Honorable J. William Reynolds, Mayor, City of Bethlehem (Nominator)

**WHAT:** Soltech Solutions, LLC, is the SBA Eastern Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Success of the Year

**WHEN:** May 4 at 3:00 p.m.

**WHERE:** Pi: Partnership for Innovation, 520 Evans St., Suite 3, Bethlehem

Soltech Solutions is a lighting design firm specializing in the research, development, and production of plant lights. Designed out of Bethlehem, Soltech’s advanced photosynthesis spectrum, sleek minimalist fixtures, and ambient indirect lighting offer a simple solution for plant owners to grow any plant with seamlessly integrated lighting anywhere in their home.

The business was started with a Kickstarter campaign in 2017 with the goal of designing grow lights that could be tastefully incorporated into people’s homes. The three cofounders, Paul Hodges, Michael Planer, and Chris Clark started the venture in a friend’s unfinished basement. Today, the three owners continue to maintain 100% ownership of the business. Soltech currently has 21 employees, and the business offers benefits and paid vacation time to its full-time staff.

Soltech faced difficulty in the fall of 2021, when the pandemic and global supply shortages caused lead times to change from several weeks to several months. With the help of SBA-guaranteed loans and credit lines though M&T Bank, the injections of capital investment allowed Soltech to secure enough product supply to allow for continued sales, increased revenue growth, and the sustainment of jobs in the local community.

“It’s a privilege to recognize the achievements of entrepreneurs such as Paul Hodges, Michael Planer, and Chris Clark,” said Steve Dixel, SBA Eastern Pennsylvania Director. “We are proud to play a role in helping Soltech Solutions access SBA’s capital programs which allows them to positively impact the Lehigh Valley economy, continue to grow their manufacturing business and create jobs in communities such as the city of Bethlehem.”

(more)

Soltech is located within Pi: Partnership for Innovation. The space is managed by the Bethlehem Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) and funded by the City of Bethlehem. Soltech has expanded from 232 sq. ft. to 3,500 sq. ft. The innovative nature of Soltech qualified it for the Southside Bethlehem Keystone Innovation Zone Program, managed by the City and BEDCO, which was able to fund Soltech’s initial purchase of inventory and provide them with other resources. Soltech has also utilized Lehigh University Small Business Development Center for international export grants and SCORE for business building advice.

“The Soltech team has worked with every resource and organization available to them. They are smart and savvy, yet humble business owners,” said nominator J. William Reynolds, Mayor, City of Bethlehem. “We are honored that the team, who did not grow up in Bethlehem nor go to college here, decided to launch their company in the City of Bethlehem based on a CNN Money article entitled ‘Top 100 Places to Live and Launch’.”

The Soltech team regularly donates to the community-focused non-profit Humanitarian Social Innovations (HSI), which two of the founding members started in 2014, that has provided support to more than 100 goodwill projects and grassroots movements. In 2020, Soltech Solutions founded the Built for Brilliance Award at Temple University. The $10,000 award supports undergraduate students with financial need who are planning to participate in a study abroad program.

“As Soltech continues to grow, we hope it enhances the lives of individuals and families across the globe with the intent of making lives a little greener,” said Paul Hodges, Cofounder, Soltech Solutions.

“It’s an honor to be named SBA’s Eastern Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Success of the Year,” added Michael Planer, Cofounder, Soltech Solutions. “We thank the SBA for recognizing our business and thank Mayor Reynolds for the nomination.”

“Through awarding Soltech this award, it will hopefully inspire others to continue in a similar pursuit, persevere, and ultimately become the positive change they wish to see in their lives and the lives of others,” said Chris Clark, Cofounder, Soltech Solutions.

SBA’s Eastern Pennsylvania Entrepreneurial Success of the Year award winner is selected annually from among nominees located across the 40 counties of eastern Pennsylvania. National Small Business Week recognizes the small business community’s contribution to the American economy. Learn more about National Small Business Week at <https://www.sba.gov/national-small-business-week>.

During National Small Business Week, the U.S. Small Business Administration recognizes and awards outstanding entrepreneurs, small business owners, and others from around the country. Additionally, recognition and educational events throughout SBA’s 10 Regions and 68 Districts will be held throughout the month of May.

***For interviews or additional information, contact Sonia Smith at*** ***sonia.smith@sba.gov******.***

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**About the U.S. Small Business Administration**

The U.S. Small Business Administration helps power the American dream of business ownership. As the only go-to resource and voice for small businesses backed by the strength of the federal government, the SBA empowers entrepreneurs and small business owners with the resources and support they need to start, grow, expand their businesses, or recover from a declared disaster. It delivers services through an extensive network of SBA field offices and partnerships with public and private organizations. To learn more, visit [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).