
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Southside Bethlehem KIZ Invests in Entrepreneurs to Start 2021

Bethlehem, PA –The Southside Bethlehem Keystone Innovation Zone (KIZ), a program of BEDCO, and focused on supporting entrepreneurs at the earliest stages, wasted no time investing in startup companies.

Technology Transfer (Commercialization) Grants

Two \$15,000 Technology Transfer Grants have been awarded to companies by the KIZ Board. [Almas Foods International](#) was awarded \$15,000 for marketing. This is their second such award through the KIZ and they have recently expanded their facility in [Pi: Partnership for Innovation](#) from 232 sq. ft. to 777 sq. ft. Almas is better recognized through their product name, Zaffrus, that covers a variety of saffron-based products. They are working closely with Lehigh’s Small Business Development Center to further develop their marketing plan.

"Each of KIZ grants has helped us in different directions" said Ali Almasi, CEO of Almas Foods International LLC. "One has allowed us to optimize and increase our manufacturing capacity, and the other has helped us to reach a bigger market for our saffron products."

[Celebr8 Life](#) is a new company in Bethlehem’s startup scene that focuses on creating highlight reels from your saved content. They were awarded \$15,000 to develop video solutions and marketing of the technology. Celebr8 Life is located in the Ben Franklin TechVentures facility.

"Celebr8 Life is excited to be working with the Southside KIZ to grow our business in Bethlehem!" said Steven Freed, CEO of Celebr8 Life. "We look forward to helping people get more from their pictures in PA and beyond."

"Plentiful early stage investment, coupled with affordable living and unparalleled quality of life, separate Bethlehem from other communities" explains Bethlehem Mayor Bob Donchez. "I’m willing to put the resources and culture available to entrepreneurs here in Bethlehem up against any other community."

COVID Relief Funds

2020 was a year like none other with the prevalence of COVID and shutdowns. As a result, the KIZ did not invest close to what it budgeted for 2020. Those available funds were used to fund KIZ Companies that applied through the City of Bethlehem COVID Funding programs. These companies were in danger of not receiving grant funding due to the large demand for the program and limited funds available. The KIZ Board stepped in and awarded \$40,800 in the 9 companies that applied.

"I’m thankful the KIZ stepped up and approved funding for these startup companies" said Bethlehem Mayor Bob Donchez. "Research on resilient communities following periods of economic decline suggest that investing in entrepreneurship has a measurable and positive impact on our community."

“The KIZ has been amazing to work with, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic” said Val Arzunian, CEO of UBMe. “Their impact and financial support has allowed us at UBMe to aid communities with safe and efficient vaccine distribution, particularly in Bethlehem and Montgomery County, when it was needed the most. Along with the vaccine distribution, we worked with local restaurants to provide online ordering and curbside communication, thus generating the highest quality of safety while still providing revenue to restaurants.”

Matt Bieber, CEO of ProspectGen AI explained that “These funds allowed us to continue innovating and developing new technologies and solutions during a slow period for business which is now proving of great benefit during the market rebound!”

Student Internship Grants

5 startups are currently utilizing local student interns with funding provided through the KIZ Student Internship Program. This program has been critical to these companies as they often do not have the ability to add payroll while launching the product.

BEDCO

The Bethlehem Economic Development Corporation (BEDCO) was established in 1982 for the purpose of facilitating economic development in the City of Bethlehem. BEDCO works closely with the City of Bethlehem’s Department of Community & Economic Development to ensure a unified economic development strategy.

Southside Bethlehem KIZ

The mission of the Southside Bethlehem KIZ is to foster innovation and create entrepreneurial opportunities by aligning the combined resources of educational institutions, the public sector, and the private sector. The Southside Bethlehem KIZ was established in 2004 and is now in its 17th year of operation. The KIZ has had a profound impact on innovation and entrepreneurship in Bethlehem by offering critical financial resources and assistance to early-stage startup companies. To date, the KIZ has invested over \$9 million dollars in 100 companies since the program’s inception.

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