

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## MEDIA RELEASE

# A NEW CREATIVE ERA: 19 LOCAL STARTUPS LAUNCH IN STRATFORD AND ACROSS PERTH COUNTY

*Provincial grant and intensive mentorship empower a diverse cohort of Arts and Culture Entrepreneurs*

Stratford, ON – Tuesday, March 10, 2026 – The local business landscape is flourishing as the Stratford Perth Centre for Business (SPCB) announces the launch of 19 new ventures across Stratford, St. Marys, and Perth County. Through this year's Starter Company Plus "Arts and Culture" cohort, 19 talented entrepreneurs completed eight weeks of intensive business planning training, mastering the essentials of cash flow, operations, and marketing. Funded by the Province of Ontario and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, with additional sponsorship support provided by Perth County, the program awarded each successful graduate a \$5,000 grant and personalized coaching from January 12 to March 9, 2026. Facilitated by the Stratford Perth Centre for Business, this hybrid mentorship program ensures these new creative businesses have the professional foundation to thrive and contribute to our region's vibrant economic future.

"This cohort highlights the incredible creative talent across our area," said **Holly Mortimer, Business Advisor with the Stratford Perth Centre for Business**. "Through the Starter Company Plus program, these entrepreneurs have built the business skills and confidence needed to turn their ideas into sustainable ventures that will enrich our local economy and cultural community."

### Meet the 2026 Starter Company Plus "Arts and Culture" Graduates

The 2026 Starter Company Plus "Arts and Culture" graduates represent a diverse range of creative and experience-based ventures, including:

#### **Samantha Weber, The Kin Cabin**

A boutique creative mini studio in Shakespeare, Ontario offering an inspiring space for photography, styling sessions, small business education, and workshops [www.thekincabin.ca](http://www.thekincabin.ca)

#### **Gabriella Fortune, Cuyuni Creates Art Gallery & Co-Creating Studio**

A curated art gallery featuring original works by local artists and makers, while also hosting creative classes, workshops, and community events. [www.cuyunicreates.com](http://www.cuyunicreates.com)

#### **Johann Yundt, Johann Music**

A community-focused music business providing live performance, musical collaboration, and event-based programming. [johannyundt@gmail.com](mailto:johannyundt@gmail.com)

#### **Kelan Herr, The Boathouse Stratford**

Offering scenic on-the-water experiences including boat rentals, guided tours, and relaxed riverside hospitality along Stratford's park system. [www.avonboathouse.com](http://www.avonboathouse.com)

#### **Kris Bernard, Elevated Presence**

A professional training service focused on intentional communication, modern etiquette, body language, and behavioural leadership. [www.elevatedpresence.ca](http://www.elevatedpresence.ca)

#### **Lynne Huras, Silly Goat Studio**

A Canadian landscape painter capturing the rhythm of land, trees, and sky through expressive paintings inspired by the natural environment. [www.sillygoatstudio.ca](http://www.sillygoatstudio.ca)

#### **Sarah Lappano, Sarah Lappano Photography**

A documentary-style photographer specializing in intentional, narrative-driven imagery that captures authentic moments and stories. [www.sarahlappanophotography.ca](http://www.sarahlappanophotography.ca)

**Becky Westman, Serendipity Sips Mobile Bar**

A converted camping trailer offering fully equipped mobile bar services for weddings and outdoor events.

[serendipitysipsmobilebar@gmail.com](mailto:serendipitysipsmobilebar@gmail.com)

**Eliesha Richardson, Star Stuff by Eliesha**

Fantasy-inspired jewelry blending traditional craftsmanship with modern technology to create celestial-themed wearable art.

[www.starstuffbyeliesha.com](http://www.starstuffbyeliesha.com)

**Heidi Sander, Pathways to Poetry Membership**

An online poetry membership community offering inspiration, learning, and connection for writers and poetry enthusiasts.

[hello@heidisander.com](mailto:hello@heidisander.com)

**Andrew Newman, Newman Restoration**

A full-service art logistics and installation company providing framing, storage, transportation, and professional installation for artists, galleries, and collectors.

[www.stratfordartservices.com](http://www.stratfordartservices.com)

**Nathan Schleicher, Mischief & Wilde**

Designers and makers of imaginative play environments that encourage creativity, connection, and shared experiences.

[www.mischiefandwilde.com](http://www.mischiefandwilde.com)

**Jilaine Parkes, The Vintage Swan**

A specialty rental service providing vintage-themed décor and styling for weddings, celebrations, and special events.

[vintageswanevents@gmail.com](mailto:vintageswanevents@gmail.com)

**Arien Nagel, Red Top Berries**

A picturesque strawberry farm in North Perth offering both u-pick and pre-picked strawberries for visitors and local customers.

[www.redtopberries.ca](http://www.redtopberries.ca)

**Regan Thiel, A Drink With Jam & Bread**

A mobile tea service delivering curated tea experiences for weddings, gatherings, and special events. [reganthiel@gmail.com](mailto:reganthiel@gmail.com)

**Lucinda Jones, My Custom Framer / Lucinda Jones Art**

Combining original paintings, hand-pulled prints, and expert custom framing to help collectors showcase art that inspires.

[lucindajones@quadro.net](mailto:lucindajones@quadro.net)

**Peg Dunnem, hey maker**

A pop-up yarn shop and maker space devoted to fibre arts, creativity, and community connection. [pdunnem@gmail.com](mailto:pdunnem@gmail.com)

**Jamie & Ashley Principe, Imperial Epoxy Ltd.**

A husband-and-wife team delivering premium epoxy flooring and custom surfaces for residential and commercial spaces.

[www.imperialepoxyLtd.ca](http://www.imperialepoxyLtd.ca)

**Liesa Hartman, Hartman's Coffee Tea**

A colourful licensed micro-café in downtown Stratford serving coffee, tea, and café favourites with big personality in a small space.

[brew.stratford@gmail.com](mailto:brew.stratford@gmail.com)

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About the Stratford Perth Centre for Business

*The Stratford Perth Centre for Business operates as a department of investStratford in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. It is committed to helping small business owners achieve their business goals. The Centre offers local small business support and complimentary consultation and easy access to resources, including business start-up services to support the development of new and already established small businesses. In addition to advisory services, events, seminars, and training opportunities are held throughout the year to meet small business essentials. For more info visit: [stratfordperthbusiness.ca](http://stratfordperthbusiness.ca) or [info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca](mailto:info@stratfordperthbusiness.ca)*

About investStratford:

*investStratford is committed to advancing the economic future of Stratford, Ontario, Canada through investment in arts, education, and industry. Globally Connected | Community Driven For more info visit: [investStratford.com](http://investStratford.com)*

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