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MEDIA RELEASE

EMPOWERING THE NEXT GENERATION: 11 STUDENT START-UPS LAUNCH IN STRATFORD AND PERTH COUNTY

Provincial and Local Partnerships Fuel Young Entrepreneurs with \$33,000 in Grants and Mentorship

Stratford, Ontario – June 26, 2026 ... Today, the Stratford Perth Centre for Business announced the successful launch of 11 new student-run small businesses through the annual Summer Company program. This year's cohort of young, local entrepreneurs across Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County is backed by a powerful combination of intensive mentorship and \$33,000 in provincial and regional partnership support.

Funded by the **Province of Ontario and the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade**, the **Summer Company program** provides participants with hands-on business training, expert mentorship, and a \$3,000 micro-grant. To encourage sustainable business habits, students receive half of the grant upfront to cover initial start-up costs, with the remaining balance awarded upon successful completion of the program.

"Every year, the sheer energy and creativity of these young entrepreneurs completely blows me away," said Joani Gerber, CEO of investStratford. "The funding provided by the Province of Ontario allows us to build the vital bedrock that makes this program possible. Thanks to Ontario's commitment—and the incredible way our regional partners stepped up to expand it—we are giving these students the ultimate platform to test their ideas, build real-world skills, and invest directly in the future of our local economy."

The impact of this year's program has been significantly expanded thanks to vital collaborative funding from regional partners. Generous sponsorship support from **Perth County**, the **Perth Community Futures Development Corporation**, **investStratford**, and the **Town of St. Marys** has allowed the Stratford Perth Centre for Business to extend this invaluable opportunity to three additional students this summer.

Program graduates include:

Lucy Webster, Art-to-Heart: Art-to-Heart: is located in Stratford and offers personalized art lessons, portfolio prep, academic tutoring, and creative respite programming for all ages. Look out for her creative community events and accessible drop-in sessions on Tom Patterson Island this summer! Lucy is a post-secondary student and can be reached via email at art.to.heart.stratford@gmail.com, on Instagram (@art_to_heart_stratford), or through her website.

Vincent Macisaac, Stratford Green Scapes: Stratford Green Scapes is a full-service lawn maintenance company located in Stratford that provides professional mowing, weed trimming, core aeration, and seasonal yard cleanups. Vincent is a high school student and is available for quotes at Stratfordgreenscapes@gmail.com or 519-801-6608, and can also be found on Facebook and Instagram (@stratford_green_scapes).

Mandy Cacic, Miscellaneous Art: Miscellaneous Art is located in Stratford, where Mandy turns her creative passion into vibrant, custom merchandise. She creates and sells original paintings and highly detailed, handmade custom pins featuring unique illustrations and animal designs. Mandy is a post-secondary student and you can get in contact with her through Instagram @misc.art_

Oliver Johnstone, OnDeck Marine Care: OnDeck Marine Care provides premium, recurring dockside cleaning services designed to keep boats clean, protected, and ready to use all season long. Servicing boats directly at a local marina with no hauling or prep required. Oliver is a post-secondary student and can be reached via his website at www.ondeckmarine.com or at ondeckmarine.contact@gmail.com. You can also connect with him on Instagram and Facebook at @ondeckmarinecare

Kieran Johnson, Green Side Lawn Care: Green Side Lawn Care is located in Stratford and offers a wide selection of property care to keep your yard looking its absolute best. Services include routine mowing and trimming, extensive yard cleanups, seeding, and precise mulch installation. Kieran is a high school student and can be reached by email at kieran@greensidelawnca.ca for inquiries, quotes, or more information about Greenside Lawn Care services.

Cindy Yuan, Portraits by Cindy: Portraits by Cindy is located in Stratford and specializes in high-quality visual art. Cindy offers custom commission artwork tailored to your vision using graphite, watercolours, and acrylics, which are perfect for meaningful gifts or statement home decor. Cindy is a post-secondary student and can be reached via cindyuan@cystudio.art or at www.cystudio.art. You can also follow and connect on Instagram and Facebook at @c.y.studios

Ben Ewing, besportsp photography: besportsp photography is located in St. Marys, where Ben captures high-energy action shots for local athletes, parents, and community leagues. Ben is a high school student and specializes in professional sports photography, regularly covering local baseball games and sporting events.

Ryan Clark, Ryan's Lawn Care: Ryan's Lawn Care is located in St. Marys and provides dependable, routine residential lawn maintenance right across the community. Reach out to secure your spot on his route for prompt service and consistent lawn care!

Nathan Preston, Green Productions: Green Productions is located in St. Marys, helping businesses across the area and neighbouring communities elevate their digital presence with custom video production. Nathan is a high school student who creates professional and promotional videos. He can be reached at nathan.greentheh1@gmail.com or find him on YouTube at @Green_the_H1 for content and updates.

Jayda Houben, Grounded Firewood Supply Co.: Grounded Firewood Supply Co. is located in Wartburg and takes an eco-conscious approach to campfires. Jayda is a high school student who supplies premium firewood, kindling, and fire starters entirely reclaimed from fallen trees and local storm debris. She can be reached at jaydahouben09@gmail.com or on Instagram at @groundedfirewoodsupply.

Logan Bajtos, LB Custom 3D Parts: LB Custom 3D Parts is located in Atwood, operating as a high-precision 3D printing business specializing in durable automotive components, custom prototypes, and personalized printed products made right here at home. Logan is a high school student and can be reached at loganbajtos@gmail.com. You can also connect via Instagram @lbcustom3d or Facebook at LB Custom 3D Parts.

Additional Quotes:

John Nater, MP Perth-Wellington: *"The diversity, creativity, and ingenuity of the eleven recipients of this year's Stratford Perth Centre for Business' Summer Company Program is very impressive. I wish each of the young entrepreneurs great success as they gain experience and skills that will serve them well now and in the future. Small businesses are a critical, driving force in our local economy and thanks to the ambition and determination of these young people in our community the outlook is bright."*

Matthew Rae, MPP Perth-Wellington: *"It is great to see young entrepreneurs pursuing their business ideas and investing in their future," said MPP Matthew Rae. "Our government is proud to support Summer Company program, which provides practical support, mentorship, and real-world experience that help turn ideas into successful businesses. Thank you to the Stratford Perth Centre for Business and Perth County for mentoring these young entrepreneurs. I look forward to following their success in the years ahead."*

Martin Ritsma, Mayor of Stratford: *"The Province's renewal of the Summer Company Grants provides amazing opportunities for young entrepreneurs in our local communities. This investment and the mentorship that goes along with the program inspires and develops the business owner of the tomorrow. I am always impressed by unique and diverse student run summer businesses."*

The SBEC program is delivered locally by investStratford and funded in partnership with the Government of Ontario. The Stratford Perth Centre for Business operates as a department of investStratford in partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

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About the Stratford-Perth Centre for Business

The Stratford Perth Centre for Business 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. www.stratfordperthbusiness.ca | 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

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