

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Re]Fresh Juice Co. receives \$10,000 at Guelph's first women-only pitch competition

Guelph Community Acupuncture and The Children's Art Factory receive \$5,000 each

September 22, 2015 (Guelph, ON) – [re]Fresh Juice Co., an organic cold-pressed juice bar and the newest addition to Guelph's Québec Street, received 1st place and a \$10,000 cash award at last night's Rhyze Award pitch competition.

The company was one of nine local women-owned businesses that competed for more than \$20,000 in cash and in-kind awards at the University of Guelph's Arboretum Centre. The sold event was the first women-only pitch competition in Guelph and Wellington County, with more than 130 community members, business leaders and entrepreneurs in attendance.

"The Rhyze Award has been two years in the making and is truly a dream come true for all involved with the Rhyze Project. We are so proud of the finalists for sharing their entrepreneurial journey and taking advantage of this incredible opportunity to challenge themselves and grow their respective businesses" said Kristel Manes, director of Innovation Guelph and the Rhyze Project. "With the completion of the Rhyze Award program cycle last night, **we can now begin to measure the impact of investing in women-owned businesses in our community**, while continuing to cultivate the programs, education and financial resources that will grow them in the years to come."

[re]Fresh Juice Co. founder Whitney Douglas plans to use the cash award to invest in a walk-in cooler that will enable the company to scale their operations. [re]Fresh was also guaranteed a feature article in an upcoming issue of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce's *Moving Business Forward* member magazine.

Judges for last night's competition included Pam Banks, Executive Director for Mississauga's Regional Innovation Centre; Julia Christensen-Hughes, Dean of the College of Business and Economics, University of Guelph; Shawn Clifford, Vice-President of Commercial Services, Meridian Credit Union; Jennifer Fletcher, Program Manager, Entrepreneurship & Applied Research at Conestoga College; and Kithio Mwanzia, Guelph Chamber of Commerce President & CEO.

Second place was awarded to **Guelph Community Acupuncture**, provider of accessible, affordable group acupuncture treatments. Founder and registered acupuncturist Lisa Baird gave a solid pitch that earned the organization \$5,000 for marketing and office supplies, as well as 10 hours of business mentoring from Innovation Guelph.

Third place was awarded to **The Children's Art Factory (CAF)**, a creative studio space dedicated to preschool children. Founder Melissa Mazar received \$5,000 to expand the space, 10 hours of business mentoring from Innovation Guelph and \$500 from Worth Communications to strengthen the CAF's marketing and communications efforts.

While cash awards were distributed to the top three at the judges' discretion, all nine finalists will receive 10 hours of business mentoring through Innovation Guelph.

The nine finalists were selected from nearly 50 applicants in Guelph and Wellington County received earlier this year. Funding for the cash awards was raised through a successful crowdfunding campaign this spring. Among other eligibility criteria, applicants were required to identify as female; be 30 years of age or older; have a new or existing enterprise based in Guelph and/or Wellington County that contributes to social or community good; and submit a business plan. Applications were subject to an intensive review process by multiple impartial volunteer panels from Guelph's business and academic communities.

Follow [@TheRhyzeProject](https://twitter.com/TheRhyzeProject) on Twitter for updates on the project and women's entrepreneurship in Guelph and Wellington County.

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About The Rhyze Project

Formerly the Women's Economic Advancement Project, The Rhyze Project is a collaborative project led by Innovation Guelph that cultivates women's entrepreneurial spirit in Guelph and Wellington County. The Rhyze Project has received funding through Status of Women Canada and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to research, design and develop pilot programs focused on business education, mentorship and the development of financial resources for women entrepreneurs. The Rhyze Award (previously The Ignite Award) is the first such program to emerge from the project.

About Innovation Guelph

[Innovation Guelph](#) helps ideas start, grow, and thrive by cultivating entrepreneurs, developing powerful partnerships, and supporting innovative initiatives that transform the way we do things in business and in our community. We help companies, entrepreneurs and youth to explore and solve business challenges through our hands-on approach to business coaching. We're committed to helping businesses succeed. We also work with The City of Guelph, the region, local organizations, and community groups to strengthen community projects that will improve the quality of life in Guelph. Innovation Guelph is a member of the [Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs](#) (ONE).

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