



NEWS RELEASE

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Giving Tuesday offers Finger Lakes Areas Expats Opportunity to Give Back this Holiday Season

Rochester, NY, November 23, 2015 -- When Rochester area expatriates (expats), who are passionate about their hometown, return for the Holidays, they will marvel over the growth of the local startup community in a region traditionally recognized for large corporations like Eastman Kodak and Xerox. And this year they will have a chance to get involved through Giving Tuesday donations to support a new seed fund helping area startup companies at the critical proof-of-concept stage. As the only nonprofit venture development organization serving companies across the 27-counties in the western half of New York State, Launch NY has a crowdfunding campaign at <https://www.givegab.com/nonprofits/launch-ny/campaigns/launch-ny> where expats can make a charitable contribution to build startups and the innovation economy in a region they love. The website service charges are waived for donations made on Giving Tuesday.

Giving Tuesday, on December 1 this year, refers to the first Tuesday after Thanksgiving, following major shopping days like “Cyber Monday” with a national day of giving to charities and nonprofits. Giving Tuesday marks the beginning of what is historically the largest month for charity and non-profit donations. Launch NY hopes that former residents returning for the Holidays, and those who visit online from afar, will find time to reacquaint themselves with the local startup community and, in the spirit of the season, share their resources with those startup ventures who are driving a new regional economy.

Launch NY provides pro bono mentoring and seed capital in the Upstate NY region that only receives 3% of all venture capital invested in New York State annually. “Living in the NYC area now, but having been raised in Western NY, I know that there is a way to bring more venture capital to the Upstate NY area, where there is an explosion of entrepreneurial activity. I’m committed to supporting this dynamic growth both personally and professionally. As the Executive Director of Upstate Venture Association of NY (UVANY), I know that having strong startup businesses in the region will help us attract more private sector capital to support Upstate NY as a hotbed of innovation,” said Sam Ticknor.

Another expat shares the same feelings, “Many colleagues in the entrepreneurial community leave their hometowns in the pursuit of greatness. Former Upstate New Yorkers have the unique advantage of bringing their tenaciousness, ingenuity and drive that for me comes from my upbringing in New York. Returning to find the entrepreneurial community flourishing the way it has should make any expat proud. Upstate New York is experiencing an entrepreneurial renaissance, the likes of which no one in several generations has experienced. I feel an obligation to guide others through those first trying years of hard

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work, just as others had guided me.” said Austin, Texas-based Graig Presti, Founder and CEO of LocalSearchforDentists.com and FindMyCompany.com.

Launch NY clients like Rochester-based Evoke Healthy Food highlight the success of a new generation of entrepreneurs. Founded in 2012, Evoke provides healthy muesli products to food markets and grocery stores, including many large regional grocers such as Wegmans, Whole Foods, Fairway, Giant, Kings, and Stop & Shop. President and Founder Ian Szalinski began selling products at the Rochester Public Market. “I started Evoke because there’s really a void in healthy, convenient, breakfast food options,” Szalinski said. “In the current market, there are so many products with processed ingredients and a lot of sugar, oil and ingredients your body just doesn’t need.”

Among more than 450 clients served to date, Launch NY helped Szalinski and Evoke Healthy Foods with business mentoring in its early stages of sales and distribution, team building, and fundraising from investors, which ultimately positioned it to enter a time-limited, intense accelerator program. “Launch NY has really played an integral role in helping Evoke. Their mentoring and resources have helped us become who we are today.” said Szalinski. Launch NY will continue to support Evoke as it heads into a new phase of fundraising and market expansion.

“Launch NY is one of the first venture development organizations in the country to support our entrepreneurs through a crowdfunding campaign to fuel vital seed capital. We know expats have so much to offer our entrepreneurs and want to get involved in venture philanthropy, so Giving Tuesday came at a perfect time to allow our expats to make a true difference in a region they love,” says Marnie LaVigne, President & CEO of Launch NY.

People who are passionate about the Upstate NY region can engage with Launch NY’s Facebook page, and participate with their campaign on GiveGab’s website <https://www.givegab.com/nonprofits/launch-ny/campaigns/launch-ny>.

To view Launch NY’s short documentary visit their Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/launchny>

The documentary is also available for embedding on their YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnJHTWT2Svk>

About Launch New York

The mission of Launch New York, Inc. (Launch NY) is to identify, support and invest in high growth, high-impact startup companies and catalyze the entrepreneurial culture in the 27 counties in the Western half of New York State. Launch NY is a 501(c)(3) non-profit venture development organization that provides pro bono mentoring services combined with seed capital in order to create venture capital-ready (deal-ready) companies which have the promise to create significant economic jobs and wealth in the region. For more information, visit www.launchny.org.

Launch NY was formed as a result of a collaboration between stakeholders and regional economic development leaders in Upstate New York to create successful, sustainable strategies that would foster a robust self-sustaining entrepreneurial ecosystem built on regional collaboration. Launch NY is headquartered in Buffalo and has regional co-location with partner organizations in Binghamton, Ithaca, Rochester and Syracuse. It has served over 450 companies comprising more than 1000 jobs since starting operations in 2012.

About Evoke Healthy Foods

Evoke Healthy Foods makes real cereal made with ingredients that are good for your body- whole grains, dried fruits, nuts and seeds. Evoke Healthy Foods makes the best muesli by finding the perfect balance of nutrition and taste. Its products do not contain any artificial preservatives, dyes, trans fat, corn syrup, or hydrogenated oils.

From the health of Evoke's customers to supporting the community and environment, Evoke Healthy Foods seeks to make a positive impact with each bowl of muesli served. The company also supports local community organizations and helps improve the environment through minimizing its carbon footprint and supporting environmental causes.

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