



NEWS RELEASE

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Giving Tuesday offers Upstate NY Expats Opportunity to Give Back this Holiday Season

Syracuse, Binghamton & Ithaca, November 23, 2015 -- When Central New York and Southern Tier 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 that is ready to reverse the trend in loss of industry and population. 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 1st 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 new 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

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 Syracuse-based JoJo Rings highlight the success of a new wave of entrepreneurs. JoJo Rings, led Jordan Dudden, sells locally handcrafted jewelry from 100% recycled keys. Dudden designed and handcrafted the first JoJo Ring in her Syracuse University jewelry class in the fall of 2014. “I actually had some compliments from friends, strangers on the street and even a few store owners, so I decided to launch the company in January 2015.”

Jordan Dudden founded the company with the community in mind. JoJo Rings operates with three key principles: sustainability, social good and individuality. “Being socially responsible is something that’s close to my heart. That’s why each month we’re partnering with a different community organization to make a donation for every ring sale to a new cause” said Dudden.

JoJo Rings even caught the eye of a famous Syracuse expat family member, Hailey Baldwin, daughter of Stephen Baldwin, who posted an Instagram photo of herself wearing a double key ring made by JoJo rings. “That was really cool, she has over 2 million followers on Instagram,” Dudden said. Others took notice as well. The post received over 55,000 “likes” and over 200 comments.

Among more than 450 clients served to date, Launch NY has helped JoJo Rings work with investors and other key business resources. “Launch NY has really helped me along the way” said Dudden, “the resources they provide were so valuable to me and are valuable to any entrepreneur.” Launch NY’s Entrepreneur-in-Residence supported JoJo Rings development of a business plan and important connections to store owners, manufacturers, and funding sources. With a winning pitch, Dudden secured prize money from a business plan competition that spurred early company growth.

Similarly, Launch NY is assisting promising startup companies throughout the Southern Tier. MaidBot, an Ithaca-based startup provides safe and cost-efficient housekeeping solutions through autonomous robotics to the hospitality industry. The company decreases the time to clean a room and reduces work-related injuries while improving housekeeper and guest experiences. “There are so many things humans shouldn’t do anymore and cleaning is one of them,” Micah Green, CEO of Maidbot said. “We have the technology, why are we still cleaning?” According to Green, housekeeping is the highest variable cost for hotels of any size. “Room attendants also have the highest injury rate among service sector workers.” Currently, with continuing Launch NY support Maidbot is working on presenting an alpha version of their robotic vacuum to major hotel executives in January 2016.

In Binghamton, Launch NY client, Josh Yank, CEO of Yank Technologies founded the company to establish a wire free world where people are not constantly hampered by electronic devices running out of battery power. His company specializes in developing hardware architecture and communication systems that enable resonant inductive technology to wirelessly charge devices no matter where they are. “Our systems aim to solve inherent problems with current wireless charging solutions, especially overheating, inflexible positioning and standardization issues,” Yank said. Launch NY mentors have provided pro bono mentoring at every stage of the company’s development, including the crucial proof-of-concept phase.

“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 JoJo Rings

JoJo Rings, LLC is a Central New York based company that produces and sells locally handcrafted jewelry from 100% recycled keys. Founded in 2015 with the community in mind, JoJo Rings operates according to three guiding principles: sustainability, social good, and individuality. The company tagline “Key to Change” reflects its commitment to social good. With each sale, JoJo Rings makes a contribution to a local nonprofit to help our community. Because of its manufacturing process and use of recycled materials, no two JoJo Rings are identical. JoJo Rings are a celebration of individual style. The company believes that its customers deserve one-of-a-kind jewelry because “you, yourself, are one-of-a-kind.”

About MaidBot

Located in Ithaca, New York, Maidbot provides safe and cost-efficient housekeeping solutions through autonomous robotics to the hospitality industry. Maidbot decreases the time to clean a room and reduces work-related injuries while improving the housekeeper and guest experiences. The team works out of Ithaca Rev’s Accelerator Program with support from Cornell University and Life Changing Labs and

offers a friendly, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic staff of robotics, design, and hospitality industry experts.

About Yank Technologies

Yank Tech was founded by Josh Yank on December 16, 2013 in Binghamton, New York, and specializes in developing hardware architecture and communication systems that enable resonant inductive technology to wirelessly charge devices as they move freely.

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