



Winners Announced for 2016 Upstate Venture Ecosystem Awards Over 300 In Attendance to Honor Upstate's Startup Leaders

September 19, 2016

<p>Upstate Unleashed Conference</p> <hr/> <p>2016 Venture Ecosystem Awards</p>		<p>Turning Stone Resort</p> <hr/> <p>September 16, 2016</p>	<p>UPSTATE, NY (PRESS RELEASE) - Upstate Venture Connect (UVC) hosted the 2nd Annual Upstate Unleashed Conference and 2016 Venture Ecosystem Awards on September 16 at the Turning Stone Resort.</p>
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300 entrepreneurs, founders, mentors and investors from the startup community were in attendance coming from communities from Albany, Buffalo, Binghamton, Syracuse, Rochester and the Hudson Valley.

[Tim Keenan](#), accomplished serial entrepreneur and Cofounder of the Keenan Center for Entrepreneurship at Le Moyne College delivered a stellar keynote address highlighting the importance of “taking action” to create a sustainable startup community across Upstate New York.

Nasir Ali, UVC Cofounder and CEO remarked, “We were thrilled to see such a diverse and distinguished audience of entrepreneurs, investors and mentors attend both the Awards Luncheon and Upstate Unleashed Conference. We realized last year that this is an amazing opportunity for first time entrepreneurs seeking wider connections, and our decision to add a mini conference featuring Upstate [top CEO's](#) really paid off.”

One company and four ecosystem leaders received awards for their achievements from more than 100 nominees. Winners in five categories were announced at the 2016 Venture Ecosystem Awards luncheon.

Here are the five award categories, including winners and finalists:

Community Catalyst – Individuals who organize programs to bring together diverse startup ecosystem players in a local community and/or increase the amount of capital and number of active early stage investors in that community.



[Frank DuRoss](#) - Utica, NY

- Cofounder, Utica Comets
- Executive Director of Institutional Advancement, MVCC
- Owner, thINCubator

Community Catalyst finalists included [Elisa-Miller Out](#) of Ithaca, NY (Singlebrook Technologies; CourseQ, Women 2.0, Finger Lakes Seed Fund) and [James Senall](#) of Rochester, NY (High Tech Rochester, Rochester Angel Network)

Campus Connector – Individuals affiliated with an educational institution (could be an administrator, student, alumnus or faculty member) who are leveraging on and off-campus resources and connections to spin-out research startups and/or create opportunities to retain entrepreneurial students.



[Jason Kuruzovich](#) - Albany, NY

- Director, Severino Center
- Associate Professor of Information Systems, RPI
- Organizer, Startup Tech Valley

Campus Connector finalists included [Martin Casstevens](#) of Buffalo, NY (University at Buffalo) and [Wills Hapworth](#) of Hamilton, NY (Thought Into Action Entrepreneurship Institute at Colgate University)

Magical Mentor – Individuals who have had a transformative impact on the trajectory of one or more startup companies.



[Bill Jones](#) - Rochester, NY

- Business Development Manager, Venture Creations at RIT
- Mentor for companies including SweetWater Energy, Clear Cove, IMSWorkX and Splyce

Magical Mentor finalists included [Steven Raines](#) of Buffalo, NY (Algonquin Studios, VCAMP Accelerator, SWRemote, ZenPRM) and [Steve Suhowatsky](#) of Syracuse, NY (Syracuse University Blackstone Launchpad, Tech Garden, Seed Capital Fund of CNY)

Ecosystem Champion – Individuals who are catalyzing and supporting startup activity across multiple Upstate communities.



[Marnie LaVigne](#) - Buffalo, NY

- President & CEO, Launch NY
- Former Leader, Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics at UB

Ecosystem Champion finalists included [Richard Glaser](#) of Rochester, NY (Merrill Lynch, RocGrowth, RocGrowth Candidids, RocGrowth Coffee) and [Jennifer Tegan](#) of Ithaca, NY (Cayuga Venture Fund, UVANY, Tompkins Trust Company)

Deal of the Year – Companies whose exit created wealth for investors and founders/employees, as well as making the company a stronger contributor to the local economy.



[GEMCOR](#) - West Seneca, NY

- Advanced All Electric Aerospace Fastening
- \$50MM Exit in March, 2016 to Ascent Aerospace
- Return of Investment to RAND Capital of 11x

Deal of the Year finalists include Athenex, Autonomy Distributors, Fibertech Networks LLC and Touchstream Solutions.

An independent panel of judges reviewed each nomination and selected the finalists and winners. For a complete list of nominees, visit UVC.org/Awards-Nominations.

Upstate Venture Connect has now launched a [Startup Survey at UVC.org/Survey](http://UVC.org/Survey) to help estimate the economic footprint of the companies in Upstate New York. By completing this short survey, founders will help grow awareness of Upstate startups, and increase investment interest among local angel investors and venture capitalists. More details on this survey will be released soon.

About UVC

[UVC](http://uvc.org) is a 501c3 public nonprofit creating an entrepreneur-led startup ecosystem for Upstate NY. Our mission is to connect and empower Upstate NY entrepreneurs with the resources for building high-growth companies. Since 2010, UVC has helped launch six angel funds and four startup accelerators. UVC also hosts a region-wide events calendar, online startup map and a communications platform that reaches over 10,000 founders and startup supporters. In 2014, UVC launched UNY50, an invitation only network of individuals who have experienced the startup world roller coaster and are committed to helping build the next great Upstate company. UVC was awarded the 2015 Global Innovation Ecosystem Award. More information at <http://uvc.org> and here's how the community can help support our mission <http://uvc.org/Ecosystem-Growth>.

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