

Public voting now open for LaunchPad business competition

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Three local businesses are among 10 selected to vie for a \$30,000 cash award in Gorham Savings Bank's third annual LaunchPad business plan competition. The community is now being asked to vote for the entrepreneur they believe will best utilize the funds to help grow their business. The local businesses are:

- Sentry EHS, Westbrook, an innovative web-based tool used by businesses to protect the environment and safeguard workers, all while lowering overhead costs.
- Beach Glass Transitions, South Portland, which provides personalized assistance to families, individuals, and employers to navigate senior care choices.
- Casco Bay Butter, Scarborough, which makes all natural and organic flavored butters using cream from local farmers.

The public is encouraged to visit launchpad.gorhamsavingsbank.com from now through May 15 to view each business summary – describing the product or service, and how they would use the \$30,000 award – and then vote for the semifinalist of their choice.

The top five finalists will pitch their idea at the live LaunchPad event on June 18, at 5:30 p.m., at the University of Southern Maine's Hannaford Hall.

Gorham Savings Bank designed and sponsored the inaugural LaunchPad program in 2013 as a competition open to existing Maine businesses or promising new startups that can demonstrate a solid business plan and compelling need and use for the funds. Bixby & Co., an organic chocolate bar maker based in Rockland, won last year's LaunchPad award. The inaugural competition in 2013 was won by Pika Energy, a Gorham-based company that manufactures residential wind turbines, using the funds to move the business from a founder's basement to a commercial space.

The other semifinalists this year are: Biovation, Boothbay, returning semifinalist from 2014, designs and manufactures a portable, lightweight product that dries a pair of wet boots within 6-8 hours; Close Buy Catalog, Portland, a school fundraising catalog featuring locally made,

healthy, and useful products that people feel good about buying; DemerBox, Portland, designs and manufactures rugged, great-sounding, Bluetooth boom boxes out of Pelican Brand cases;

Flowfold, Peaks Island, returning finalist from 2014, produces everyday carry gear that allows adventurers to carry their belongings with confidence; Green Bee Soda, Brunswick, returning finalist from 2013, offers a healthier alternative to traditional soda, handcrafted from local honey and whole ingredients; Portland Pudgy, Portland, an unsinkable dinghy that's also a little sailboat and a dynamic lifeboat you can sail to safety; and Saco River Dyehouse, Biddeford, returning finalist from 2013, dyes and finishes yarns and fibers creating local jobs and beauty worldwide.

The finals judges are Craig Denekas, president and CEO of the Libra Foundation; Michelle Neujahr, entrepreneurial center director at Southern Maine Community College; and Melissa Smith, president and CEO of WEX.

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