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THE LAUNCHPAD Returns to Kick Off Global Entrepreneurship Week on the Northshore

Applications Now Open for STartUP Northshore's November 16 Pitch Competition

COVINGTON, La. –Today, STartUP Northshore is proud to announce the return of THE LAUNCHPAD, a high-energy, live pitch competition spotlighting early-stage entrepreneurs from across the Northshore. The competition will kick off **Global Entrepreneurship Week on Monday, November 16**, bringing founders, business leaders, investors, and community partners together in Slidell as part of a weeklong celebration of entrepreneurship across the region. **Applications are now open and will close on Sunday, October 25 at 11:59 PM.**

Global Entrepreneurship Week, taking place November 16–22, is an international celebration of the people who start and grow businesses, with communities around the world hosting events that connect entrepreneurs with knowledge, mentors, investors, resources, and one another. THE LAUNCHPAD will serve as one of the Northshore's anchor activities during the week, while STartUP Northshore works alongside partners throughout Greater New Orleans to connect local entrepreneurs with additional events and opportunities across the Southeast Louisiana entrepreneurial ecosystem. Three finalists will compete for a \$5,000 prize pool, awarding \$3,000 for the winning pitch and \$1,000 for each runner-up, helping to bring their next big move within reach while encouraging entrepreneurial growth on the Northshore.

STartUP Northshore is proud to welcome back OnPath Foundation as the 2026 Presenting Sponsor of THE LAUNCHPAD. Through its support, OnPath Foundation is expanding access to entrepreneurial programming and investing in the bold ideas shaping the future of St. Tammany.

“Being part of the judging panel for THE LAUNCHPAD’s summer competition was an incredible opportunity to see firsthand the creativity, passion, and determination of entrepreneurs across our region,” said **Jay Huffstatler, Executive Director of OnPath Foundation**. “We were impressed by the ideas and potential each contestant brought forward, and it reinforced just how important it is to create opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs to grow and succeed.

“Entrepreneurship is one of the Foundation’s core pillars, and we’re excited to celebrate and invest in innovators who are helping shape the future of our region”

Building on the success of STartUP Northshore’s premiere pitch competition, the NSpire Startup Slam, THE LAUNCHPAD offers a complementary platform for early-stage founders who are working to get their ideas off the ground. The competition is part of STartUP Northshore’s growing program pipeline, which includes *IDEAinstitute Northshore* as well as multiple resources designed to support entrepreneurs throughout their journey from idea to exit.

“THE LAUNCHPAD has always been about more than what happens on stage. It's about connecting promising founders with the people, resources, and opportunities that can help them take their next step,” said **Cenzo Caronna, St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation Entrepreneur-in-Residence and STartUP Northshore Executive Director**. “Hosting this competition during Global Entrepreneurship Week

gives us an opportunity to showcase what's being built here on the Northshore while connecting our founders to the larger innovation ecosystem across Southeast Louisiana and beyond.

“With the continued support of OnPath Foundation and our regional partners, we want entrepreneurs to see the Northshore as part of a much broader network available to help them start and grow.”

For the winner of this summer’s event, THE LAUNCHPAD served as both a product advancement opportunity and a personal growth experience.

“THE LAUNCHPAD was an incredible experience for me and for IBEX. The support, feedback, and encouragement I received from StartUP Northshore helped me strengthen not only my pitch, but the way I think about the business and where it can go,” said **Michael Bishop, Founder of IBEX**. “Winning THE LAUNCHPAD was an incredible validation of the work I’ve put into IBEX, but the real value has been everything surrounding it including the education, the relationships, the confidence, and the momentum to keep moving forward.”

The competition will feature finalists pitching live to a panel of expert judges. Finalists will receive individualized coaching prior to the event and compete for startup funding and resources designed to help advance their business.

To learn more about this event, apply to pitch your business, or register to attend, visit **startupnorthshore.com/the-launchpad** or contact STartUP Northshore Executive Director Cenzo Caronna at vcaronna@sttammanyedc.org.

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About STartUP Northshore

STartUP Northshore is cultivating a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem through strategic partnerships with leading organizations in the startup community, including the Louisiana Small Business Development Center at Southeastern Louisiana University and The Idea Village, to deliver first-class programming for entrepreneurs and second-stage companies. STartUP Northshore is supported by a regional collaboration among St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation, Tangipahoa Economic Development, and Washington Economic Development Foundation. Through this initiative, the next wave of local entrepreneurs from all three parishes gain access to immersive education, dynamic networking opportunities, and mentorship from industry leaders, experienced founders, and capital investors—all delivered on the Northshore. STartUP Northshore is managed by St. Tammany Economic Development Corporation. For more information about STartUP Northshore, please visit startupnorthshore.com.

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