



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Café Commerce Announces Winners for Venture Challenge SA

Venture Challenge SA awards \$20,000 in seed funding to local entrepreneurs

San Antonio – Café Commerce, San Antonio's first-stop entrepreneurship and small business resource center, hosted the inaugural Venture Challenge SA Awards Ceremony at the San Antonio Public Library on Thursday, June 9, 2016. Mayor Ivy Taylor provided opening remarks, welcoming attendees and recognizing challenge participants for their hard work.

"Venture Challenge SA was created in partnership with [The Hartford](#) to encourage entrepreneurs and small businesses to map their milestones by developing—and actually advancing-- their team, product and customer market goals," said Café Commerce President Nadia Auch.

The seven challenge finalists presented rapid-fire, 90-second pitches on Thursday, before Café Commerce board members and community judges announced the three Venture Challenge winners, awarding them \$20,000 in funding to develop and grow their small businesses.

Venture Challenge SA Winners:

\$10,000: Kelley Slagle from The Vinegar Joint: The Vinegar Joint creates and sells a variety of vinegars, including artisanal drinking vinegars to the general public.

\$5,000 Morgan Weidinger from RATIO: RATIO is a social enterprise raising awareness of local and international problems affecting the world through a curated photography platform, with a percentage of the profits going to those affected communities.

\$5,000 Stella Bustos from Thera Pillow: Thera Pillow offers a unique pillow, the KNEEBAK, which allows for better posture, comfort and blood flow while driving long distances.

"Through our national philanthropic program, The Hartford is pleased to offer support to entrepreneurs and small businesses that might not otherwise have the chance to

prevail,” said Diane Cantello, vice president of Corporate Responsibility at The Hartford. “We are proud to partner with Café Commerce and LiftFund because of the valuable resources each offers to small businesses in the San Antonio region.”

Following the awards ceremony, challenge participants, local business leaders and city officials gathered to enjoy tapas, drinks and celebrate the small business growth and development over the course of the program.

"As an advisory board member to Café Commerce and a judge in our inaugural Venture Challenge SA, it's exciting to know our organization can seed the journey of bringing a business idea to life," said local restaurateur Lisa Wong, owner of Rosario's and Acenar restaurants.

About Café Commerce

Café Commerce is the first stop for entrepreneurs, startups and small businesses. Through a partnership with the City of San Antonio Economic Development Department and LiftFund, Café Commerce offers valuable information, resources, one-on-one support, workshops, networking opportunities and a variety of tailored programs such as: 1 Million Cups, Break Fast & Launch, and Venture Challenge SA.

About The Hartford

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