



GWINNETT COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

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MEDIA ALERT

NEW START ENTREPRENEURSHIP WINNERS AWARDED START UP MONEY

March 30, 2023 - The Gwinnett County Public Library, through its foundation, awarded a total of \$5000 to three recent graduates of the New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator program.

The New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator (NSEI) provides business education for formerly incarcerated individuals through in-person classes, online coursework, and a robust network of mentors and community partners. NSEI is specifically geared towards the reentry population, which, in Georgia, is disproportionately minority populations and people of color.

The program's culmination occurs at The Launchpad, where the young entrepreneurs pitch their businesses to community business leaders. They are judged on several criteria, and the strongest pitches win.

AWARD RECIPIENTS:

Bridgette Simpson - Co-founder of Barred Business
\$2,500 Outstanding Business Pitch, First Place

Bridgette "Bri" Simpson was also referred to the New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator by alumni of cohort 2. Bri is a formerly incarcerated survivor, advocate, entrepreneur, published author, motivational speaker, certified life coach, and co-founder of Barred Business and the Formerly Incarcerated Small Business Rescue Fund. Bri

partners with other survivors, advocates, social justice reform organizations, organizers, public figures, formerly incarcerated and incarcerated people to empower, inspire change and promote hope.

Hot Sticky Buns is a party, a place of joy and transformation, a place of belonging and sustainable work. Everything is prepared in-house, including simmering sauces, creating their own condiments, and, of course, baking hot sticky buns every day. Their menu is fun and flirty and highly Instagrammable. They proudly hire, train, and employ justice-impacted people. The mission of Hot Sticky Buns is to create a space for justice-impacted people to thrive, learn, grow, and create; to build new doorways in place of the ones that have been closed to them.

Dewy Ventura Joa - Business Owner, CholoMMA
\$1,500 Outstanding Business Pitch, Second Place

Dewy Ventura Joa was born in Puerto Rico to Dominican parents. He is now a producer, actor, artist, and director living in Atlanta. He has been featured in movies such as The Mule, Jumanji 3, and Bad Boys 3. He has also been featured in music videos. He has directed many music videos for major artists. Dewy currently runs and co-produces CholoMMA, a mixed martial arts virtual academy, along with two partners.

CholoMMA offers Virtual Brazilian Jiu-jitsu training and high-quality video production for professional fighters, sponsors, and Jiu-jitsu academies to be used on websites, social media, and for promotion. They provide in-person Jiu-jitsu seminars for mixed arts academies and Jiu-jitsu practitioners. CholoMMA is changing the way people view and learn Jujitsu and Dewy is honored to be a part of something that is making a huge impact in the mixed martial arts world.

Mia Jacobs - Founder and Owner of DeCCRO
\$1000 Outstanding Business Pitch, Third Place

Mia Jacobs was referred to the New Start Entrepreneurship Incubator by alumni of the program. She is the founder and owner of DeCCRO. She originated from Suffolk, Virginia but moved to Atlanta in hopes of building a brand and

a legacy. However, being a young mother and not having the support and guidance needed, she learned that, sometimes, all it takes is one bad decision to affect the entire trajectory of your life. Mia found herself behind bars for a short period of time but turned that experience into the biggest and most positive lesson of her life. During this time Mia met some really amazing artists and creators, and she has truly come to believe that the art and soul of a person comes out in various ways when you are forced to live with and reflect upon yourself. She arose from that experience with a desire to showcase the amazing artists that exist within the community.

That vision came to life in the form of DeCCRO. DeCCRO is a stress free way to design your space using Mia's app. Consumers will be able to upload any piece of furniture and have her vendors pair your items with their work. Mia's app is designed to showcase the very people who inspired her during some of her darkest times. Several of her vendors have been incarcerated themselves, but now they create beautiful pieces of refurbished furniture. Mia's greatest hope is to uplift them and provide them with a platform and jobs.

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