

LAUNCH



10

YEAR IMPACT  
SUMMARY











# MISSION AND VISION

**MISSION:** Our mission is to empower communities and individuals through entrepreneurship.

**VISION:** Our vision is for a community that builds hope and equity for all individuals through entrepreneurship. LAUNCH exists to build a thriving Chattanooga where every individual who dreams of a business can be confident that the community will stand with them, removing obstacles and creating opportunities for their success.

## TIMELINE:

2011

- **Inception of LAUNCH: training & support for underrepresented entrepreneurs and a temporary jobs training program**
- **Worked with Mason West and the Talented Tenth Program to begin High School Program at Howard High School**

2012

- **Added class location in East Chattanooga in partnership with Glass House Collective and Hope for the Inner City**
- **High School Program expands to include Tyner Academy**

2013

- **Added class location in Hill City at Northside Neighborhood House**
- **High School Program expands to include Brainerd High School**

2014

- **Added class location in Brainerd at the Tennessee Career Center**
- **High School Program expands to include Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy**
- **Began national expansion by creating Start Spark network to support the beginning of Spring GR in Grand Rapids, Michigan**

## 2015

- Added class location in East Chattanooga at Hope for the Inner City

## 2016

- High School Program expands to include East Ridge High School, STEM School, and Red Bank High School
- LAUNCH moves into the Chattanooga Workspace building
- Added class location Downtown at the Chattanooga Workspace
- Created new high school curriculum, LAUNCHing Bright Ideas
- Created LAUNCH 2.0 Program to focus on marketing, finance and operations for businesses that had already started

## 2017

- High School Program expands to include Central High School

## 2018

- Added Highway 58 class location at the Mt. Canaan Baptist Church
- LAUNCH moves into the Business Development Center and becomes a service provider
- Implement Tech Goes Home program for entrepreneurs
- Partner with Launch Tennessee to bring LAUNCHing Bright Ideas to high schools across the state
- Added class location in Highland Park in partnership with La Paz

## 2019

- LAUNCH creates new Startup Award - LAUNCH Microbusiness of the Year Award

## 2020

- Open Kitchen Incubator of Chattanooga (KIC) in Brainerd area
- Create LAUNCH Provisions Project (LPP) and provided 50,000 meals for at-risk seniors during the COVID crisis
- Began Virtual Classes

## 2021

- Created new curriculum: The startup Matrix





## Letter from the Executive Director

Reflecting on the past 10 years, I can honestly say I've never had such a powerful and inspiring experience working to build any other organization. There are so many people that come to mind over the past years. These individual entrepreneurs are the reason we exist. I've been able to witness amazing people doing amazing things with their lives and businesses. I've seen entrepreneurs overcome so many obstacles to build a successful business and become self-sufficient. When you haven't had role models for starting a business, it's easy to think it's not for you and maybe it's not worth the risk. Yet many who have stepped into entrepreneurship have found their calling in life.

But, individuals are only part of it. The business owners with whom we work are operating in the context of a community of entrepreneurs on the same journey. Once a business owner is off and running, they immediately look back to see how they can help other new entrepreneurs coming behind them. There's a lot of power in that for those that are trying something they've never tried before.

We started LAUNCH with the hope that we could create a more equitable landscape in our city for entrepreneurs of all races and from all backgrounds. We provide training, coaching, networking, connection to capital, connection to other business professionals and other resources that can help a business grow. Now, we also have a commercial kitchen incubator for those in the food business!

Thank you to the hundreds of entrepreneurs who have inspired our team over the past 10 years, to the countless partners who funded and worked beside us and to our community that has found new businesses to love and support. We could not have done this work without you.

I look forward to seeing where the next decade takes us as we continue empowering entrepreneurs!

Hal



# 10 YEAR DATA SUMMARY

## ADULT

BUSINESS  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
ACADEMY (BEA)

70%  
Female

30%  
Male

637

Entrepreneurs  
Trained



389

Businesses  
Started



91% are owned by  
underrepresented  
entrepreneurs

442

Jobs  
Created



1%  
Other

73%  
African American

20%  
Caucasian

6%  
Hispanic

## YOUTH

HIGH SCHOOL  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
PROGRAM

58%  
Female

42%  
Male

8

High Schools  
Served



958

High School  
Students Trained



52%  
African American

18%  
Hispanic

27%  
Caucasian

3%  
Other

100% reported increasing business knowledge and skills

## START SPARK

20

Partners  
Trained



17

Cities



# PROGRAMS AND METHODS: LAUNCH CHA ACADEMY

## HISTORY

In 2010, a group of local businessmen were moved by the negative impact of the recession on those in poverty and were inspired to call on individuals, churches, and businesses to use their collective experience to provide support to underserved entrepreneurs. Their goal was to focus on communities of high unemployment, empower individuals by fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, and encourage job creation by building small businesses and putting people in a position to succeed. With this goal and backing from the community, LAUNCH was born.

LAUNCH's first class, the Business Entrepreneurship Academy, began in April 2011. In 2012, LAUNCH expanded into two additional areas of the city and began outreach to a younger generation of entrepreneurs by partnering with The Howard School to create the High School Entrepreneurship Program. Over the ensuing 10 years, LAUNCH has conducted classes in Alton Park, Hill City, East Chattanooga, Brainerd, the Downtown area, and most recently, online.





## HOW IT WORKS

LAUNCH exists to equip populations that are typically underrepresented in entrepreneurship - women, minorities and residents of low-income communities - with the tools needed for economic viability, self-sufficiency, and generational wealth-building through small business development. The LAUNCH CHA Academy is a 10-week program for adults that equips participants with the financial literacy and tools needed for a successful business startup. The LAUNCH CHA Academy is a relational, community-building experience where participants walk through the process of starting a business, from discovering and refining an idea, to analyzing the customer and competition, to making financial projections. The classes take place weekly for 10 weeks and are each led by a facilitator who is a past graduate of the program. In this program, entrepreneurs are equipped with the knowledge needed for a successful business start up, or may learn that a pivot is needed. Each week, participants are introduced to business leaders in the community who serve as guest speakers, and are able to learn real-world practices and increase their social capital. Through the process, the entrepreneurs develop friendships, tap into new networks, practice public speaking, and have the opportunity to turn their idea into reality.

## QUOTES FROM LAUNCH GRADUATES

*“A life-changing experience that has empowered me with the unrelentless confidence to move forward in my entrepreneurial pursuit.”*

*“I am now connected to people who are really passionate about what they do. They are eager to help and will go above and beyond to help me and my classmates succeed. I am on the right track thanks to this program.”*

*“LAUNCH has given me a business foundation and network of resources to be successful and sustainable!”*

*“LAUNCH opened me up to a new world of how to launch a business, the ins and outs of business, encouragement, motivation, and gave me the resources to expand my vision. I absolutely love this program!”*



# DATA SUMMARY

## LAUNCH CHA ACADEMY



**637**

**Entrepreneurs  
Trained**



**389**

**Businesses  
Started**



**70%**  
Female

**30%**  
Male

**96.7%**

said LAUNCH has been helpful  
on their entrepreneurial journey

**93.4%**

reported "I have greater confidence in my  
ability to successfully operate a business"

**88%**

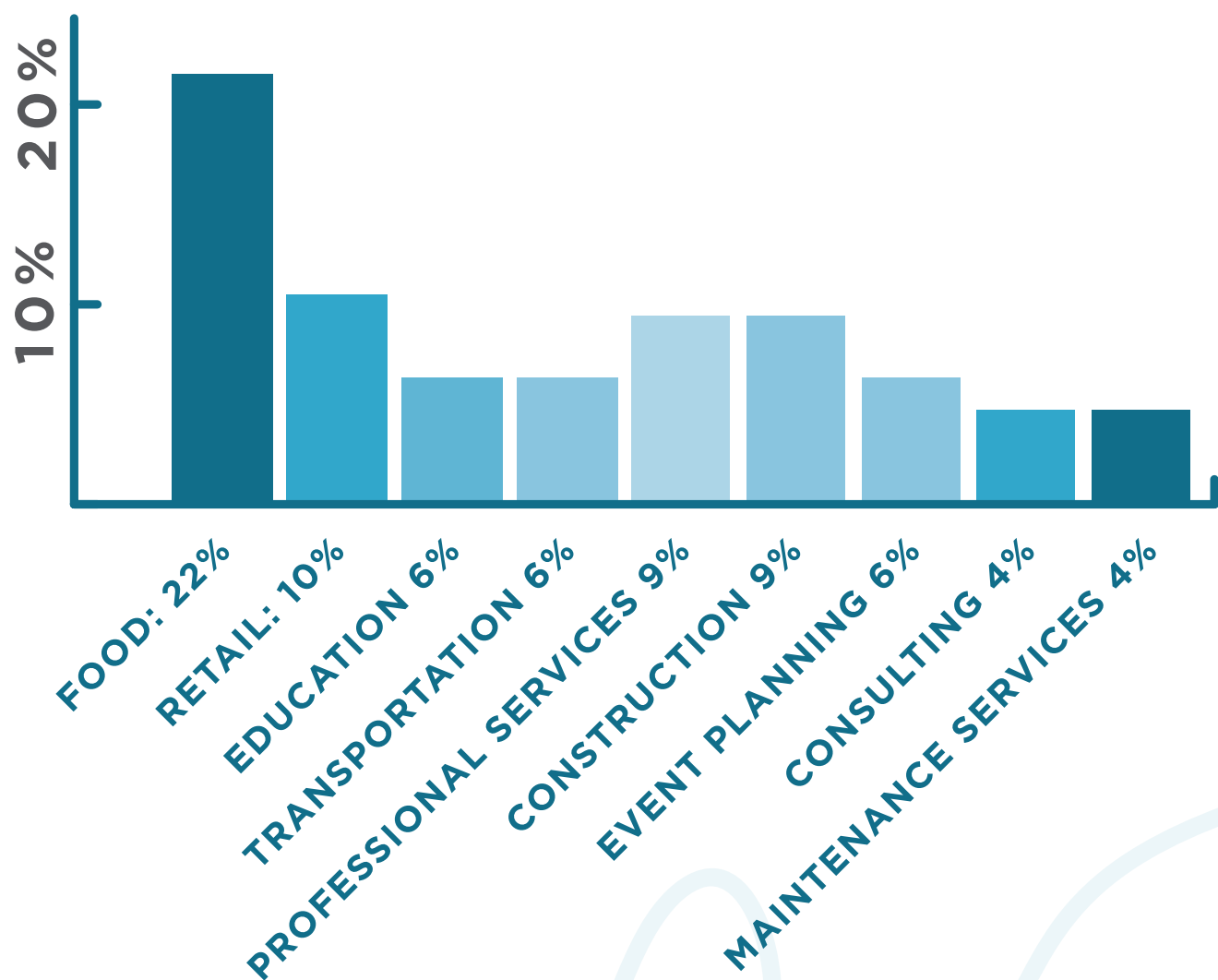
reported "My professional  
network has grown"

**80%**

graduation rate



# Top Industries of LAUNCHpreneurs



# BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

**AFTER COMPLETING** the 10-week entrepreneurship course, entrepreneurs are offered optional technical assistance and other business support services. Our goal is to empower those who have a business idea and help them launch and grow their venture into a successful enterprise. The LAUNCH team offers one-on-one **business coaching** for three years after graduation from the 10-week class, providing customized coaching covering topics including operations, finance, marketing, capital, licensing, etc. LAUNCH conducts regular **workshops** in partnership with local businesses and non-profits, offering training on a myriad of topics, ranging from time management, to public speaking, to reading financial statements, to social media marketing strategies, and many others. We also utilize a network of local businesspeople, trained by LAUNCH in coaching and facilitation best practices, that serve as **mentors/coaches** to the entrepreneurs who need industry-specific guidance or advanced technical assistance.

Another piece of our business support strategy is vetting and connecting entrepreneurs to loan opportunities in our community that offer low-interest, no-collateral **loan options**. Over the last 10 years, LAUNCH has hosted several **pitch competitions**, offering entrepreneurs an opportunity to present their businesses to the public and potentially win seed money. We have hosted 4 pitch competitions with great success!

Although a great business idea and the drive and skills to make it work are the most important factors in starting a business, it is also important to understand how technology can impact your business. LAUNCH designed an 8-week class to offer business-focused **technology training** and partnered with Tech Goes Home to give each participant a laptop at the end of the class. Most recently, on our 10 year anniversary, LAUNCH created the Mike Hertzog **Scholarship Award** to be given annually to an entrepreneur who embodies the character traits of service, perseverance, and inspiration.





## QUOTES FROM LAUNCH ALUMNI

*"LAUNCH is a wonderful program for those seeking to dive into entrepreneurship. I am so glad that I participated in the program and still have access to assistance and advice when needed."*

*"It was the best experience for me - both professionally and personally. I can't say enough good things about it. It sparked a passion in me that I did not even know was there."*

*"LAUNCH is very important to the city of Chattanooga and other cities because they help further business owners. LAUNCH provides a great service to everyone that participates in the program if starting a new business or not. My business and I have grown because of LAUNCH and I don't know where I would be without the program."*

*"The support of multiple LAUNCH staff members and LAUNCH participants was crucial to my knowledge and confidence in starting my business."*

*"I loved my class when I went through the program. Best time and money I have ever spent! I continue to feel supported 2 years later, and especially during the pandemic. The class is priceless! I highly recommend it to others looking to start a business all the time!"*

*"I really love how tapped in LAUNCH is with entrepreneurs post graduation. They are truly all about helping the founder."*

*"I think LAUNCH is a very valuable community resource in that it helps put solid legs on dreams, imaginings, and aspirations that are needed to get things moving."*

## DATA SUMMARY

> **Over 6,000 hours  
of one-on-one coaching**

**52%**

of graduates seek further business support

**97.9%**

reported finding the business coaching  
“valuable” or “very valuable”

**33%**

of businesses employ people  
other than the owner

**NPS Score  
of 71.3**

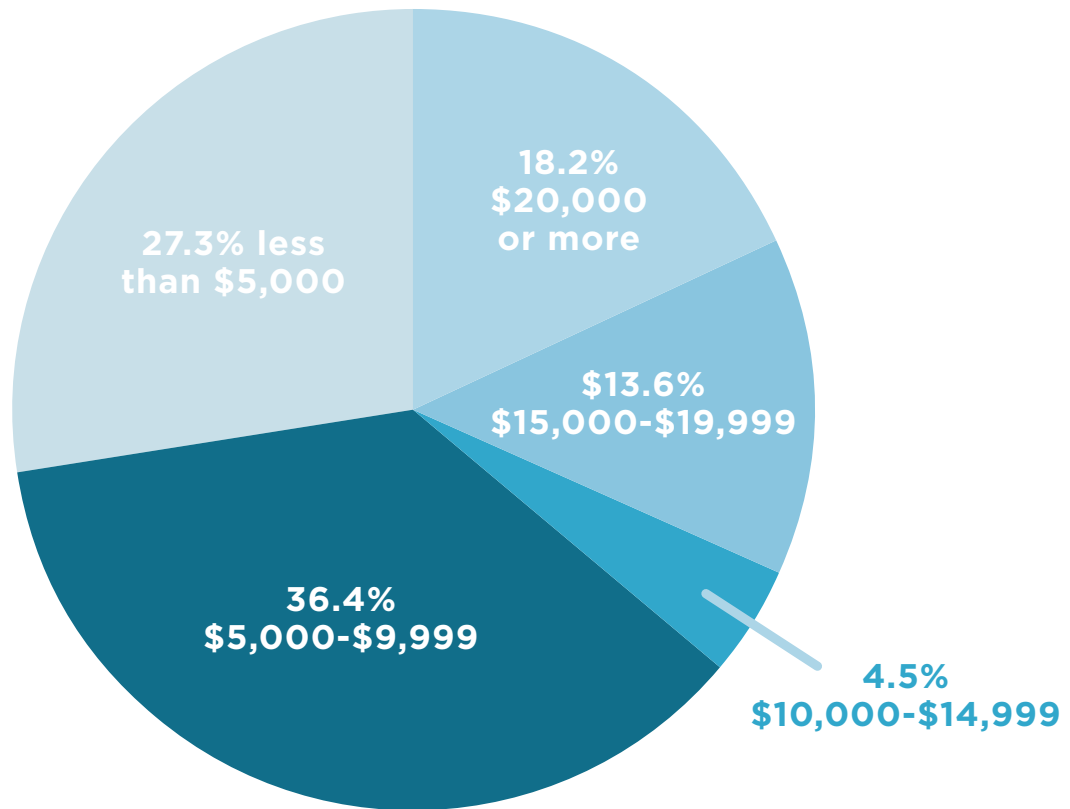


**370  
workshops**

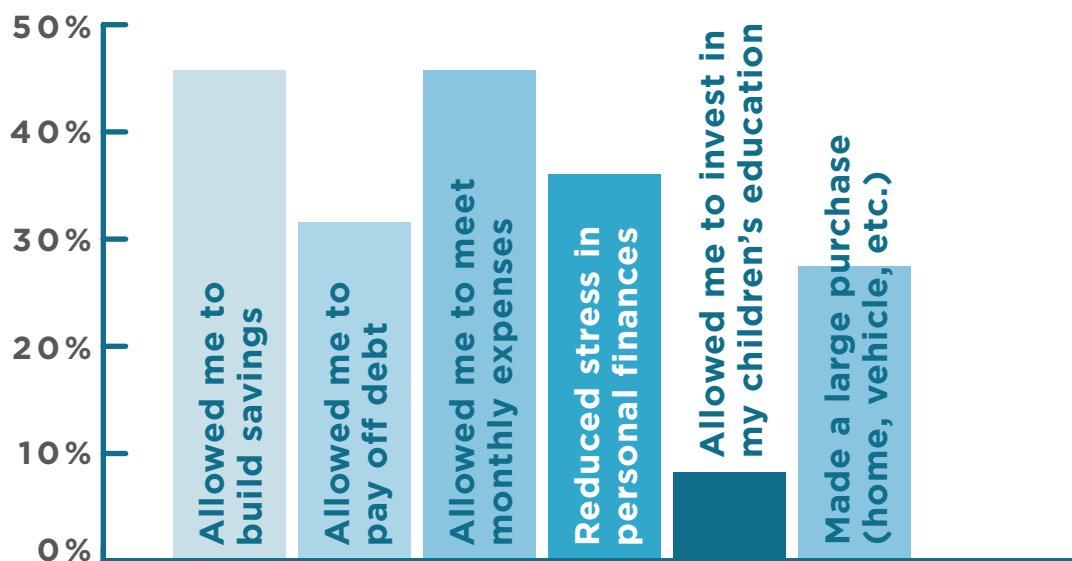




## Personal annual income increase of LAUNCH business owners



## Impact of Additional Income



# LAUNCHING BRIGHT IDEAS

## HISTORY

Started in 2011, LAUNCH began as a training and coaching organization focused on providing startup assistance to underserved populations in Chattanooga; the High School Entrepreneurship Program grew out of this foundational program later that year. At Howard High School, located less than a mile from LAUNCH headquarters at the time, principals and staff were exploring innovative solutions to help increase student achievement in what was then a failing school. After meetings with faculty and staff discussing the benefits of entrepreneurship programming in public schools, a partnership emerged. LAUNCH began working with students as a component of one of their existing classes. Over time, the program became a class of its own.

Ten years later, the LAUNCHING Bright Ideas Entrepreneurship Program has operated in 8 schools, served nearly one thousand students, created a curriculum based on that experience, and even trained teachers how to implement our program in other cities.

## HOW IT WORKS:

Typically, in each school, 20-25 students work in small groups to brainstorm and create a business idea and simple business plan for how they will start and grow the business. Classes are offered during the school day (2-5 days a week) in local high schools, led by LAUNCH facilitators or classroom teachers. Students are guided through the process of identifying a problem, creating a solution, researching the customer/market, creating a marketing plan, generating a basic distribution and operations plan, and calculating all the costs associated with starting and continuing the business. In this process, there is much experiential learning and connection to educational standards in order to maximize student learning.

The culmination of the program is “Pitch Night.” In this event students compete by “pitching” their small business ideas to a panel of judges. The contestants are judged on the viability of their ideas, as well as the quality of their presentations.



Through this process, students learn not only business principles, but also skills in innovative thinking, problem solving, teamwork, public speaking, and perseverance.

In 2019, LAUNCH began a “Train the Trainer” model to help increase our impact. We partnered with Launch Tennessee to train 16 teachers from schools all over the state. These teachers then implemented the LAUNCHing Bright Ideas program in their own classrooms, multiplying the impact of youth entrepreneurship across the state.



## QUOTES FROM LAUNCH STUDENTS

*“Something positive that I’ve learned in the LAUNCH program is to not give up on something.”*

*“I’ve learned that anything is possible.”*

*“I learned how to keep moving forward when you want to give up.”*

*“I learned to take in other people’s opinions to create something better. I also learned about the hard work, time, money, and effort that is put into making a business.”*

*“[LAUNCH] teaches us how to communicate with people and work with different types of people. We learned teamwork and communication skills for future jobs.”*

*“It opens up doors to opportunities we didn’t know were there.”*





## DATA SUMMARY

**STUDENTS SERVED: 958**  
**> 100% of students reported  
increasing business knowledge**

**80.4%**

**reported that their public speaking skills significantly  
increased through the LAUNCH program**

**89%**

**reported that their problem solving  
skills significantly increased**

**95.6%**

**reported that their knowledge of entrepreneurship and business  
increased significantly by participating in the program**

**95%**

**reported that the LAUNCH program introduced  
them to new concepts and opportunities**

**82.4%**

**reported that they are better at working with a  
team because of the LAUNCH program**

# CHATTANOOGA SCHOOLS SERVED:

The Howard School

Brainerd High School

Central High School

Tyner High School

Red Bank High School

Chattanooga Girls Leadership Academy

STEM School

East Ridge High School





# KITCHEN INCUBATOR OF CHATTANOOGA

## HISTORY

After serving microbusinesses in Chattanooga for multiple years, we started to identify additional gaps in opportunities for small businesses. 22% of LAUNCH-supported businesses are in the food industry, and it became apparent that finding a commercial kitchen that is affordable and accessible was an immense obstacle for most of the entrepreneurs we serve. In 2017, LAUNCH began evaluating what a kitchen incubator would look like in Chattanooga. We spent time getting to know the needs of entrepreneurs in the food industry, conducting a nation-wide study on how kitchen incubators have operated in other cities, and found that shared kitchen spaces in addition to mentoring programs increase an entrepreneur's chance for success. In light of this and the great number of food-centric LAUNCH CHA graduates, we embarked on the Kitchen Incubator of Chattanooga (KIC). LAUNCH opened the doors to the KIC with just 4 initial members in May 2020. We accelerated our opening plans in response to a unique opportunity to work with local organizations and funders on a COVID-related food relief program called the LAUNCH Provisions Project. Since then, our membership has exploded, reaching full (pre-renovation) capacity within a year of opening.







## HOW IT WORKS

The Kitchen Incubator of Chattanooga is our newest program that provides over 10,000 sq ft of affordable access to commercial kitchen space for caterers, food trucks, and those with delivery-based food services, as well as a program for new food businesses as they get started. Our goal is to shrink the inequitable wealth gap and create generational wealth by providing a collaborative community, real business opportunities, and empowerment so that our KIC members can grow and thrive. With 6 bakery stations, 8 commercial kitchen stations, 5 manufactured goods spaces, distribution / office space, dry and refrigerated storage, and a food truck commissary, we are equipped to incubate dozens of startups.

Entrepreneurs interested in utilizing the space can choose a membership plan that is full time or hourly, depending on their unique needs and current capacity. In addition to commercial kitchen and food prep space, we also offer extensive one-on-one coaching and direct support to the members. Some of the greatest coaching needs that have emerged so far include social media, marketing, food safety, licensing, taxes, pricing and creating menus that sell.

# DATA SUMMARY



15 CURRENT MEMBERS



215 POPUPS



**FUTURE CAPACITY (after  
planned renovations):  
30+ MEMBERS**



**CREATED AND SERVED  
75,000 MEALS FOR COVID-  
RELATED FOOD RELIEF**









# STARTSPARK

powered by LAUNCH

**STARTSPARK** is a national initiative powered by LAUNCH. Over the last 7 years, LAUNCH has identified and trained a network of community-focused organizations that provide startup business support for underrepresented entrepreneurs in communities all over the country. Using the success of LAUNCH's local programs, StartSpark provides the tools to grow diverse entrepreneurship into every corner of the United States.

In 2014, LAUNCH welcomed its first StartSpark partner in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today we have 20 partners on both coasts; all committed to addressing common issues, such as racial equity, small business creation, wealth-building, and economic development.

We partner with these organizations in their startup phase by providing training, coaching, and tools to help them build strong entrepreneur support organizations in their own cities. We also form a learning community so that the information we share from our work in various cities benefits the entire network.

## Launching LAUNCH

The first cohort of entrepreneurs graduate from the LAUNCH CHA program

2011

## Starting StartSpark

Launch takes its local success to the national stage and welcomes it's first partner in Grand Rapids, MI.

2014

## Today

20 partners across 17 cities empowering entrepreneurship strengthening the nation

2020





## MAP OF PARTNERS

The network has trained more than 3,000 aspiring entrepreneurs.



# COVID RESPONSE

## ONLINE CLASSES

**IN 2020**, out of an abundance of caution and with the intention to continue to serve entrepreneurs, we decided to continue offering our 10-week program over Zoom, free of cost. As an organization that places a high value on relationships, we were concerned that the community-building and camaraderie that is typically built throughout the in-person classes would be lost; however, we were thrilled that the classes were robust and successful. The demand for classes increased during COVID, and 87 entrepreneurs completed online classes during 2020.

## LAUNCH PROVISIONS PROJECT

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we fast-tracked our plans of opening a kitchen incubator, secured a lease, and put the space to use beginning in May of 2020. Through further partnerships with the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, Footprint Foundation, Urban Story Ventures, and many others in our community, we were able to provide over 40,000 meals to at-risk seniors and income to 9 local small business owners.

Through this work, LAUNCH developed a partnership with the Chattanooga Area Food Bank distributing 700 boxes of food each week in the fall of 2020. In the spring of 2021, we relaunched this effort alongside the Chattanooga Area Food Bank and CFGC, and delivered an additional 25,000 meals to seniors over the spring and summer of 2021.

Projects like these have shown us the vast need in our city for a food-based Incubator, the power of partnerships to serve our community and the variety of needs the KIC meets, building hope and equity for all entrepreneurs, especially women and entrepreneurs of color.

## SUMMER GRANTS

In the summer of 2020, we gathered funding to directly bolster five businesses struck hard by the pandemic. In this project titled “LAUNCH Summer Grants,” we distributed \$5,000 over 5 weeks to 5 entrepreneurs. Those who communicated the clearest, most community focused



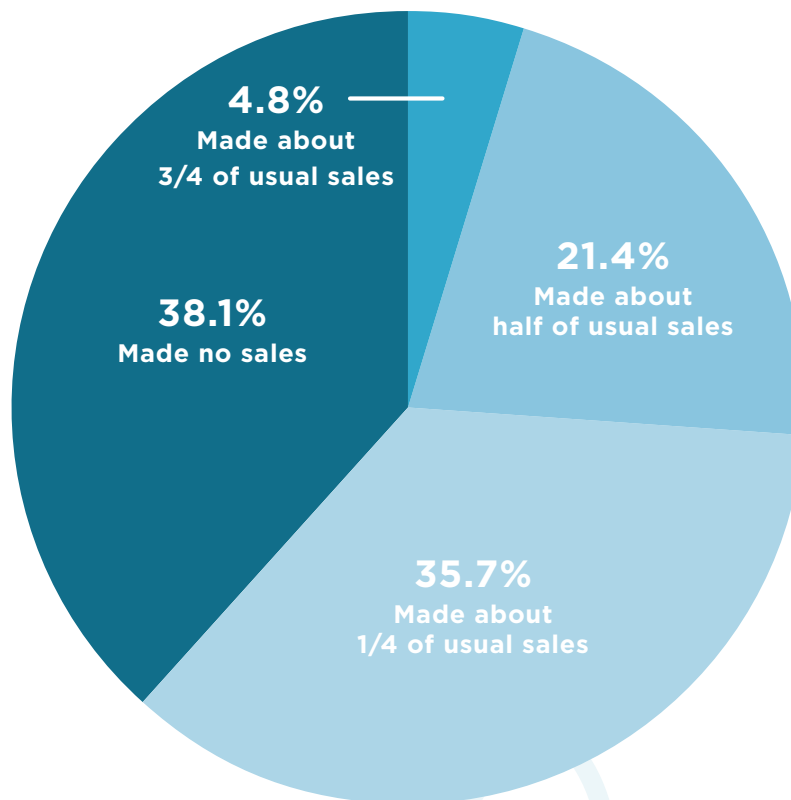
solutions to pressing needs were awarded \$1,000. These grants helped small businesses during a financially difficult time in the midst of the pandemic.

## TECH SUPPORT

Throughout the pandemic, LAUNCH was able to make small grants to support businesses with technical needs to keep their businesses afloat in a suddenly virtual world. We provided camera equipment, computer software, and website design services to several entrepreneurs.

## ***What was the effect of COVID-19 on your sales/revenue?***

***68% of LAUNCH entrepreneurs reported that their business was negatively affected by COVID-19. Those that were negatively impacted experienced the following:***



***68.4% did not receive any COVID-related assistance/support outside of LAUNCH \*Data from Q4, 2020***

# LAUNCH BUSINESS PRACTICES

**LAUNCH works from an asset-based approach.** This means that we focus on strengths and potential, not weaknesses and deficits. We believe that each participant is a valuable community member and potential business owner, with the skills and ability to succeed.

**LAUNCH works one-on-one with individual participants.** LAUNCH establishes a strong relationship with participants in order to care well for them, instill confidence and encourage completion of the process. This one-on-one approach provides a platform allowing individual entrepreneurs to bring dreams into reality.

**LAUNCH has established credibility within the community it serves, as well as the business community.** This credibility allows LAUNCH to connect and facilitate a variety of relationships and resources, bringing our community to serve the entrepreneurs we support.

**LAUNCH establishes a strong sense of community within our classrooms.** Facilitators and staff work hard to foster a comfortable, authentic and caring environment. Participants are part of a fellowship of new business owners on the same journey and feel at home when they attend a LAUNCH event. This also creates a sense of camaraderie within the organization and the participants. LAUNCH instills and builds upon self-confidence. This self-confidence is established in the community of the classroom.

**LAUNCH is building national credibility.** It has received highly competitive grants from the SBA, the Ewing Marion Kauffman foundation, Google, the DeVos Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation on a national level, and has been invited to discuss inclusion and diversity in entrepreneurship in national forums.

**LAUNCH seeks to implement best practices at all times.** We constantly seek new tools and methods by which to improve our programs. We have attracted a diverse and talented board of directors and seek to engage them in our work as much as possible. LAUNCH also strives to be fiscally responsible - we utilize all designated funds as required, and are careful stewards with the resources donated to the organization. We employ a third party bookkeeper, and have a certified professional accountant on our board who serves as the treasurer. We also undergo a third party audit every year to ensure transparency and accountability in all of our financial and operational aspects.





# BIGGER PICTURE: THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

**THE LIFEBLOOD OF ANY LOCAL COMMUNITY** is the small businesses that create jobs, provide living wages, and create opportunities for all of its members. Supporting those small businesses is imperative to creating a healthy and vibrant community, and it truly takes a village to make it happen. In Chattanooga, we often refer to the “entrepreneurial ecosystem” as an essential part of the business community. Webster’s Dictionary defines an ecosystem as a “large community of living organisms in a particular area.” An ecosystem is where different parts (in this case organizations and individuals) are linked together and dependent on one another for long-term survival. It is no different in Chattanooga; there are a host of organizations working to support entrepreneurs and families, each with a unique niche and support system. In Chattanooga, we can boast of incubators, co-working spaces, entrepreneurial training organizations, venture capital funds, crowd-funding opportunities, accelerator programs, technology support, an annual Start-up Week, Start-up Awards, an innovation district, business coaching, and many other support structures for small businesses. Only through intentional cooperation, collaboration, and interaction can the ecosystem live up to its potential to support aspiring entrepreneurs - especially those who have been historically marginalized. At LAUNCH, we recognize the immediate stumbling blocks that many minority entrepreneurs face, particularly in Chattanooga. We also see the potential for a thriving Chattanooga, one in which an ecosystem of support for entrepreneurs is established and citizens have the opportunity for meaningful employment. We strive to utilize all of the resources and opportunities that are so prevalent for some in Chattanooga and make them available for anyone with a dream.

## ***To learn more, please explore the following resources:***

- Little Town, Layered Ecosystem - Kauffman Foundation, 2016.
- Ecosystem of innovation: How Chattanooga’s entrepreneurial culture keeps pushing back the boundaries of business.

# RACIAL RECONCILIATION

## **“IT’S A DREAM AS OLD - AND AS IMPORTANT - AS OUR DEMOCRACY**

itself; a country where we all embrace our common humanity, and children of every race and ethnicity have equal opportunities to thrive.” (Restoring to Wholeness, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2017) Racism is one of the most oppressive systems in our country, and is too important of a topic to be ignored, even when it feels uncomfortable to acknowledge. It is a fact that there is both interpersonal and systemic racism in our country, and is a wrong that needs to be righted. While the American Dream claims to offer opportunity to everyone, the realities of our current economy and society reveal a deep disparity in social mobility, economic mobility, and educational opportunities for certain demographics. In the entrepreneurial realm, centuries of racist policies, redlining, and discrimination have created a huge wealth and opportunity gap for people of color. In 2015, the richest 400 people in America had more wealth than all of the African Americans in the country combined. Chattanooga is not exempt from this disgraceful history or present reality. In fact, within Hamilton County, the household earnings racial gap is 30 percent higher than the country’s as a whole. While the median household income for White families in Hamilton County is \$56,000, Black families’ median household income is a mere \$28,000. Gentrification has led Chattanooga to extreme inequality to the point that it has even been labeled as “Two Chattanoogas.” In a sense, the middle to upper class Chattanooga that has been lauded for economic booms has left half of the city out of the ecosystem it has developed, largely based on race. And while it will take time, awareness, and multi-faceted efforts, LAUNCH believes that part of the answer for the “Two Chattanoogas” issue comes through empowering historically marginalized communities, working to reduce barriers, and helping anyone with a dream create their own small business. We know that this is just one facet of an extremely complex issue, but we believe that the community can come together to help right some of the wrongs of our past by striving toward greater equity, representation, and elevation of BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) voices in our business community.

### ***To learn more, please explore the following resources:***

- Restoring to wholeness: racial healing for Ourselves, Our relationships, and Our Communities (TRHT), Kellogg Foundation, 2018.
- “Racial Reconciliation” - The Gospel Coalition

# EQUITY IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**OVER THE YEARS,** Chattanooga has made great strides to recognize and correct systemic issues that have created social and economic inequity. Nevertheless, the existing wealth gap in the community has created an economy in which it is difficult to build a business without a large amount of startup capital, or the social capital to obtain investment or loans. A history of redlining and housing discrimination has made generational wealth building nearly nonexistent in primarily black communities in Chattanooga. This, coupled with the reality that there is an enormous income disparity - the median income for White residents is nearly double that of Black residents - contributes to a significant lack of diversity in business ownership. In Chattanooga, the percentage of businesses that are owned by minorities and women continue to lag behind their representation in the general population. 42% of Chattanooga's population is of an ethnicity or race other than Caucasian, however, minority-owned businesses earn less than 5% of the overall revenue generated in the community. Less than 10% of venture-backed companies have a female founder, and less than 1% have an African American founder. LAUNCH recognizes that this gap contributes to further inequality in education, employment, business ownership, home ownership and other opportunities, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and exclusion. Meanwhile, there is an entire population of creative, talented, and driven individuals who only lack the support needed to create thriving businesses. We are passionate about addressing this issue, and our work centers around reducing barriers, creating opportunity and building equity for the historically marginalized. Entrepreneurship can be a powerful source for wealth creation in minority communities, especially if services include equipping, encouragement, capital access and multi-layered support.

"Most business ownership doesn't really look like America - in gender or ethnicity. If it did, we would have 1.9 million more businesses, 19 million more jobs and add 20% to the U.S. economy." (Maura O'Neill, Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley). In fact, the Harvard Business Review found that companies with diverse leadership actually are more successful and provide greater returns for investors than all-white male leadership. By empowering underrepresented populations to create businesses, we are not only helping individuals and families, but contributing toward a healthier, stronger economy.

***To learn more, please explore the following resources:***

- Harvard Advance Leadership Initiative “COVID-19 RECOVERY SERIES: An Equitable Economic Recovery Post-COVID Needs Inclusive Small Business Entrepreneurship”
- Harvard Business Review “The Other Diversity Dividend”
  - The Case Foundation, Inclusive Entrepreneurship
- “The Business Case for Racial Equity” by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation





# THE CASE FOR MICROBUSINESSES

**WHILE MOST ARE FAMILIAR** with the concept of small businesses, many are unaware that what they consider a small business is actually a microbusiness. Microbusinesses are defined as those businesses with fewer than 5 employees, and represent 92% of all businesses in the US! Despite this huge representation, microbusinesses are often dismissed as unimportant, or ignored due to not generating huge returns for investors. However, it would be a mistake to underestimate the value and importance of microbusinesses for families, communities, and the national economy.

On a micro level, microbusinesses are an essential part of providing income - whether full time, or supplemental income for families and individuals. Of the participants that LAUNCH serves, many report their supplemental income being instrumental in helping them pay off debt, create savings, meet monthly expenses, and generally reduce stress around finances. Second, microbusinesses meet local needs - most microbusinesses are started as a response to a gap that the founders themselves experienced. As a result, businesses are created to meet needs and gaps in the community, such as access to childcare, natural hair products, food, medical transportation, education, and many other areas. Third, microbusinesses often introduce additional resources into communities. Microbusinesses are much more likely than larger corporations to support each other and create collaborations between businesses. This attitude of support creates more robust communities, and greater opportunities for existing and future entrepreneurs. Lastly, microbusinesses showcase strong role models in a community. Owning a business is not for the faint of heart, and microbusiness owners are some of the toughest, most resilient people. Whether they realize it or not, they are role models for their children, neighbors, friends, and family, helping to inspire future generations of entrepreneurs.

On a macro level, microbusinesses have a huge impact on the economy and culture of our country. Microbusinesses are flexible, adaptable, and are better able to take advantage of non-standard work arrangements and opportunities, creating higher survival rates, which in turn provides job stability. A study in 2011 showed that microbusinesses accounted for 41.3 million jobs (31% of all private-sector jobs) and \$5 trillion of economic impact. Additionally microbusinesses have a lower-than average barrier to entry, creating a lower-risk option

for those wanting to start a business. As a result, the growth of microbusinesses has been linked to upward mobility, and economic inclusion for historically marginalized communities.

In short, microbusiness entrepreneurship, which in turn leads to business ownership, provides pathways to economic prosperity, helps bridge gaps that have been established through systemic racial injustice, and ultimately builds resiliency and stability within a community.

***To learn more, please explore the following resources:***

- “Bigger than you think: The economic impact of microbusinesses in the US”
- The Macro Benefits of Microbusinesses - Peter W. Roberts & Deonta D. Wortham, 2018



# LAUNCH ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHTS

**LAUNCH** is extremely proud of every graduate, and every business that we have worked with. Here are a few of the standouts from each year.



## **DERELLE ROSHELL**

Business: G Force Security

Year Graduated: 2011 (High School Entrepreneurship Program)

Year Business Started: 2014

Advice for the next generation of startups:

“No matter how hard you fall, get up and try again.”



## **JENNIFER HOLDER + SHAWANDA MASON**

Business: The Chatterry

Year Graduated: 2012

Year Business Started: 2014

Website: [www.thechatterry.org](http://www.thechatterry.org)

Advice for the next generation of startups:

“Remember, overnight success takes 5 to 10 years. And if you are starting a business because you think working for yourself will be easier, know that it’s not. You’ll soon be the marketing person, the accountant, the customer service person and the dreamer of your company. It’s hard work but it’s worth it!”



## **SUSAN FREEMAN**

Business: Susan M. Freeman Enterprise

Year Graduated: 2013

Year Business Started: 2011

Website: [www.smf-enterprise.com](http://www.smf-enterprise.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups: “Surround yourself with strategic thinkers, be teachable, and remain humble;

Remember to pray without ceasing and stay steadfast.”





### **JAMAAL MACON**

Business: Exclusive Cleaning Professionals

Year Graduated: 2014

Year Business Started: 2014

Website: [www.exclusivecleaningpros.com](http://www.exclusivecleaningpros.com)

Advice for next generation of startups:

“Always be willing to bet on and invest in yourself.”



### **FELICIA JACKSON**

Business: CPR Lifewrap

Year Graduated: 2015

Year Business Started: 2017

Website: [www.cprwrap.com](http://www.cprwrap.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups: “My advice for the next generation of startups would be to make strategic partnerships. This journey will have many barriers to success and it’s imperative to have people in your corner to help you navigate.”



### **MARSHUN HARDNETT**

Business: Enchanted Events

Year Graduated: 2016

Year Business Started: 2015

Website: [enchantedeventsdecorandmore.com](http://enchantedeventsdecorandmore.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups: “Find something you love to do and figure out how you can get paid to do it. If it is the first thing you think about when you wake up and the last thing on your mind when you go to sleep, it is your passion!!! Do it! Do it scared, do it now!!!”



### **SHARAE MOORE**

Business: SHE Trucking

Year Graduated: 2017

Year Business Started: 2017

Website: [www.shetrucking.com](http://www.shetrucking.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups: “Work your business harder than you would work on someone’s job.”



## ELLA LIVINGSTON

Business: Cocoa Asante

Year Graduated: 2018

Year Business Started: 2018

Website: [www.cocoaasante.com](http://www.cocoaasante.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups:

"Sometimes belief in yourself and your idea/product is the only thing that'll keep you going, especially when you are continuously told no. Continue to be motivated, don't be afraid to ask for help, and understand that failing is an integral part of the process because it allows you to learn."



## KALEENA GOLDSWORTHY

Business: The Bitter Bottle

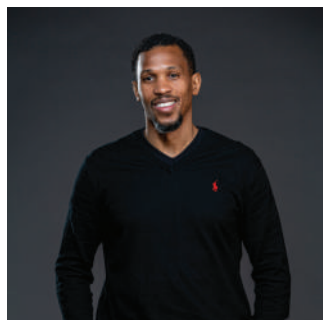
Year Graduated: 2019

Year Business Started: 2017

Website: [www.thebitterbottle.com](http://www.thebitterbottle.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups:

"Keep going. Even when things feel impossible, keep charging forward. Innovation isn't easy, and if it's not you leading the way, it will be someone else."



## MONTRELL BESLEY

Business: Chattanooga Rolling Video Games

Year Graduated 2020

Year Business Started 2021

Website: [www.ChattanoogaRVG.com](http://www.ChattanoogaRVG.com)

Advice for next generation of entrepreneurs:

"Get locked in, Plan it, Believe in it, and Do it...."



## WYKENA BROWN

Business: Kena's Cajun Kitchen

Year Graduated: 2021

Year Business Started: 2020

Website: [www.kenascajunkitchen.com](http://www.kenascajunkitchen.com)

Advice for the next generation of startups: "My best advice is seek your higher power and get a good support system in place and DO YOUR RESEARCH and when you think you got it all figured out DO MORE RESEARCH"

# FACILITATORS

**THANK YOU** to our amazing facilitators over the years! We couldn't do it without you! The following individuals have facilitated the 10-week LAUNCH program or our High School program, some for a short time, and others for many years. We are so grateful to each and every one.

## **LAUNCH PROGRAM FACILITATORS:**

**Hal Bowling - 2011-2012**

**Gina Soltau - 2012**

**Duane Capp - 2012**

**Charmane Goins - 2012-2013**

**Lane Ford - 2012-2013**

**Gray Landry - 2013-2014**

**Jennifer Holder - 2015**

**Alexis Willis - 2013-2015**

**Susan Freeman - 2014-2021**

**Linda Murray-Bullard - 2014-2019**

**Marco Perez - 2017**

**Demetria Jordan - 2018-2019**

**Marshun Hardnett - 2019-2020**

**Terence Locke - 2020-2021**

**April Corbett - 2020-2021**



# FACILITATORS

## HIGH SCHOOL FACILITATORS:

**Jonathan Mansfield - 2012-2013**

**Lurone Jennings Jr. - 2012-2018**

**Noah Bowling - 2014**

**Kendi Anderson-Rainwater - 2015**

**Greer McCollum - 2016-2017**

**Kara Gahagen Cotto - 2015-2016**

**Charlie Walker - 2013-2020**

**Brian Allen - 2016-2018**

**Susan Freeman - 2018-2020**

**Linda Murray-Bullard - 2020**



# PARTNERS THROUGH THE YEARS

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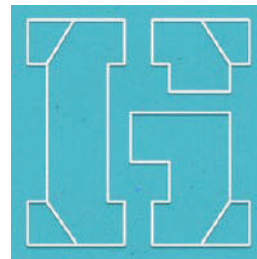


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## COMMUNITY PARTNERS









# LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT'S NEXT FOR LAUNCH

**WITH 10 YEARS** under our belt, we are extremely proud of the work we have accomplished and even more proud of the successes of our entrepreneurs. They inspire us every day to keep striving toward our goals and find innovative ways of overcoming obstacles. As we reflect on the past 10 years, we also look forward to the future and are excited for the years ahead of us serving entrepreneurs in Chattanooga.

## **IN THE NEXT YEAR:**

- **KIC Renovations - this will nearly double our capacity with food entrepreneurs!**
- **Pilot our new curriculum.**
- **Accommodate both in-person and virtual classes.**
- **Continue to provide the LAUNCHing Bright Ideas Program to local youth, finding new opportunities with the school system post-COVID and amidst administration changes.**
- **Develop new partnerships with both funders and program partners.**
- **Strengthen partnerships within the entrepreneurial ecosystem with quarterly meetings and intentional collaborations.**
- **Offer more classes to meet the growing demand of early stage entrepreneurs in our city.**

### **IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS:**

- **Continue to strive for racial and economic equity in our community.**
- **Get KIC thriving - With supply issues, price increases, and restaurant closures, we are helping KIC members navigate through these challenges, pivot, and increase profitability.**
- **Create additional revenue opportunities for members of the KIC by creating an outdoor seating area and food truck park.**
- **Continue to provide our 10-week entrepreneurship program and business support services to help create more minority and women-owned businesses in Chattanooga.**
- **Partner with local schools to create youth culinary experiences.**

### **IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:**

- **Continue our core mission of serving underrepresented entrepreneurs.**
- **Explore the possibility of another industry-specific incubator.**
- **Help build a local, collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystem that is equitable and stronger than ever.**
- **Identify and encourage enterprises in emerging industries - potentially partnering with local trade schools to provide industry-specific entrepreneurial training.**
- **Have a demonstrated impact on the number of minority and women-owned businesses in Chattanooga.**

