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Business community rallies to support local entrepreneurs competing in Innovation Awards

Pensacola, Fla. – Feb. 24, 2017 – Northwest Florida’s business community is stepping up its commitment to local entrepreneurs by offering \$19,500 in cash and business services valued at thousands of dollars to winners of the 2017 Innovation Awards – Florida’s most lucrative business plan competition.

Registration for the Innovation Awards is now underway and ends Feb. 28. After the registration deadline, judges will start reviewing company submissions. Participants will receive feedback and mentoring before the top teams are selected to compete for cash prizes, ranging from \$5,000 to \$100,000. Thanks to local businesses, winners will now also receive rent-free co-working space and business services that include legal, consulting and technical services.

Tiffany Sullivan, executive director of Innovation Coast, said she is pleased to see so many companies supporting the region’s economic development.

“They’re setting a wonderful example, and we hope others will follow their lead and become sponsors as well,” Sullivan said. “These entrepreneurs need to see that we’re all behind them rooting for their success.”

Companies and individuals can also show their support by purchasing individual tickets for \$100 to attend the two-day event at the Pensacola Beach Hilton on April 12 and 13, or \$1,000 for a table of up to 10 people.

The following companies and individuals are sponsoring or donating services to the Innovation Awards:

- **AppRiver**, 10,000 sponsorship.
- **FloridaWest Economic Development Alliance**, \$5,000 sponsorship.

- **Santa Rosa County Economic Development**, \$3,000 sponsorship.
- **SmartBank**, \$1,500 sponsorship.
- **CO:LAB** , in-kind gift valued at \$2,500 for work space and other assistance. CO:LAB is an incubator program of FloridaWest and Pensacola State College that provides dedicated offices and communal areas to promote collaboration and community.
- **Pensacola Socialdesk**, in-kind gift valued up to \$3,000. Pensacola Socialdesk is co-working space designed to facilitate work through community-oriented social interaction and collaboration.
- **J. Nevin Shaffer** is donating patent law consulting services. With 36 years in practice, Shaffer has counseled countless businesses in Alabama and Florida on intellectual property issues.
- **Kimberly Sullivan** is donating legal consulting services. Sullivan is an attorney at Moore, Hill & Westmoreland where she represents clients in forming business entities, business transactions, and in contract matters.

To register for the Innovation Awards, visit awards.innovationcoast.com. To purchase tickets, please contact Tiffany Sullivan at (850) 380-8838.