

M&T Announces Winners of Harlem Multicultural Small Business Lab Pitch Competition

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Finale of six-week program is a cornerstone of M&T's celebration of U.S. Small Business Month

HARLEM, N.Y., May 11, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- A beauty consultancy, a cold-pressed juice company, and a community gathering space were announced as the winners of [M&T Bank's](#) (NYSE:MTB) Harlem Multicultural Small Business Lab pitch competition, in partnership with [Carver Federal Savings Bank](#).



The winners, who were awarded a total of \$35,000, were selected following a pitch competition held on May 4 at the Harlem Commonwealth Council. The winners were selected by a panel of judges including representatives from M&T, Carver, Elevate Digital, and consultancy, Covenant Seven, and include:

- Erica Watson, [Mixtresses Hair Collection](#) (First Prize, \$16,000)—A firm that provides hair extensions, products, and replacement services, as well as educates clients on the beauty and maintenance of textured hair.
- Alton Weeks, [Cellful Organics](#) (Second Prize, \$12,000)—A cold-pressed juice company that aims to improve focus, mental clarity, energy, and immune systems.
- Brittany Wallace and Catherine Buccello, [The Bodega Lounge](#), NYC (Third Prize, \$7,000)—A community center for creators to build fellowship, network, and flourish personally and professionally.

In total, 60 entrepreneurs from the Harlem area participated in the Harlem Multicultural Small Business Lab – the fifth in a series of programs launched by M&T Bank in Buffalo in 2021 to help multicultural small businesses access the resources and knowledge needed to grow.

"The Harlem Multicultural Small Business Lab is an example of how M&T shows up to help the communities where we live and work," said David Femi, head of M&T's Multicultural Banking & Diverse Market Strategy. "Driving community growth and small business growth goes hand-in-hand, and I am excited about the impact these winners will create. At M&T, we are committed to the growth and sustainability of our diverse small businesses."

The Harlem Multicultural Small Business Lab helped entrepreneurs deepen their business expertise and gain insights into creating business plans, understanding credit and the underwriting process, accessing capital, marketing, networking, and more. The program was held each Thursday evening at the Harlem Commonwealth Council.

"The feeling is indescribable; this was such an invaluable experience," said Erica Watson, Owner, Mixtresses Hair Collection and first prize winner. "I feel so elated, so motivated, and so ready to take my business to the next level."

To learn more about M&T's efforts to support small business diversity, please visit: [M&T Multicultural Banking](#).

Additional Programs Putting a Spotlight on Small Businesses

The Harlem Multicultural Small Business Lab is among multiple M&T programs that celebrated and supported U.S. Small Business Week (April 30-May 6) and the bank's 338,000-plus small-business customers.

In addition to the Lab, M&T announced several ongoing small business initiatives aimed at highlighting small businesses across the bank's footprint, including:

M&T's new Spotlight Shop—in-branch retail pop-ups that feature local small businesses. The first in-branch Spotlight Shop, which was launched at M&T's Kenmore branch in Buffalo, provides a new opportunity for local entrepreneurs to showcase their brands, reach different

audiences, and expand their customer base. M&T also hosts a complementary [virtual Spotlight Shop](#) on its website to further expand the reach of these small businesses. Future Spotlight Shops are planned in Maryland, Delaware and New York.

Learning programs focused on helping entrepreneurs launch their companies. On Tuesday, May 23, M&T will host a webinar titled, "Small Business, Big Ideas? Launch Your Entrepreneurial Journey," which will address the challenges of launching a new company and provide guidance and advice from M&T bankers and small-business owners. The webinar is free to attend. To learn more and register, please visit: <https://smallbusinessbigideas.splashthat.com/>.

About M&T Bank

M&T Bank Corporation is a financial holding company headquartered in Buffalo, New York. M&T's principal banking subsidiary, M&T Bank, provides banking products and services in 12 states across the northeastern U.S. from Maine to Virginia and Washington, D.C. Trust-related services are provided in select markets in the U.S. and abroad by M&T's Wilmington Trust-affiliated companies and by M&T Bank. For more information about M&T Bank, visit www.mtb.com.

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