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STartUP Northshore Awards Kinkz \$60,000 in First-Ever NSpire Startup Slam
Slidell Entrepreneur Becomes Inaugural Winner of Northshore Pitch Competition

MANDEVILLE, La – STartUP Northshore announced that **Kinkz**, a natural hair care line based in Slidell, Louisiana, is the winner of a \$60,000 prize package of cash and services following a live showdown between the company and three other finalists in the first-ever NSpire Startup Slam pitch competition. Set against the backdrop of the historic Columbia Theatre for the Performing Arts in Downtown Hammond, on the evening of November 3rd, over 70 attendees celebrated entrepreneurship and innovation over food, drinks, and live music before witnessing the four finalist startups take center stage.

“Gratitude fills our hearts as we embark on this exciting journey, leveling up our business with the invaluable resources from NSpire Startup Slam,” said **Alana Scott, Founder & CEO of Kinkz**. “The experience of being surrounded by incredible, competitive founders has been nothing short of inspiring, propelling us toward our limitless potential.”

A panel of five business leaders from across the Northshore and the Greater New Orleans Region served as judges and scored each contestant on categories including concept, business model, market, traction, team, and commitment to and potential impact for the Northshore, with Kinkz emerging as the ultimate winner.

“The NSpire Startup Slam’s debut was a powerful demonstration of the vision and talent of the four rising entrepreneurs that competed, as well as the energy and sense of community of the Northshore entrepreneurial ecosystem,” said **Chris Masingill, CEO of St. Tammany Corporation**. “Our regional collaboration with our colleagues in Tangipahoa and Washington Parishes and the partnership developed with The Idea Village have taken STartUP Northshore’s founding mission of enhancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem on the Northshore to new heights.”

Kinkz is described as a passion project dedicated to assisting women on their journey to embracing their natural hair and building their confidence. Kinkz simplifies hair care for women with curly hair with easy-to-use styling tools, including innovative Kinkz Hair Ties, for quick and damage-free styling in just five seconds.

The prize package that Kinkz walked away with included \$25,000 in cash funding matched by high-quality in-kind services, mentorship opportunities, and access to a network of investors and industry



professionals valued at over \$35,000. The wrap-around in-kind service package includes business advisement services from The Bernard Group, Martin Business Solution, LLC; B2B CFO®; MCDS, LLC; marketing and branding strategy from Ninety by Three, LLC and PERK Social; startup legal services from The Sean Morrison Law Offices, LLC; and accounting consultation with HORNE.

Following two rounds of a rigorous application and independent panel review, the four finalists were selected to advance to the main stage after pitching to a Finalist Selection Committee made up of successful local business leaders from across the Northshore. As the finalists prepared to take the stage, each startup received one-on-one professional pitch coaching from Abbey Kish, CEO & Founder of Kish Consulting and a three-time national champion speaker.

In addition to Kinkz, the finalists who competed in the live competition were as follows:

- **Unique XP**, based in Slidell, redefines fan engagement through personalized, real-time micro-experiences and itineraries, transforming passions into extraordinary adventures.
- **11th Haus**, a modern alchemy and wellness brand based in Covington, is all about connection, creating high-quality pheromone products to enhance relationships, self-discovery, and connection with the world, inspired by astrology's 11th house themes.
- **uLand**, an Australian-founded educational tech startup, offers engaging disaster preparation and sustainability education through storytelling and visualization, making learning impactful and user-friendly.

This new pitch competition represents STartUP Northshore's latest investment in building programs that support local entrepreneurs and cultivate the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem by delivering world-class programming, networking opportunities, access to capital, and mentorship from esteemed industry leaders, investors, and founders at little to no cost to the startups.

The panel of expert judges tasked with rigorously reviewing, scoring, and selecting the ultimate winner included:

- **Jon Atkinson**, CEO, The Idea Village
- **Caitlin Hunter**, Corporate Affairs Representative, Chevron
- **Marty Mayer**, President & CEO, Stirling Properties
- **Robby Miller**, Tangipahoa Parish President
- **Sabrina Short**, Founder & CEO, NOLAVATE Black

"What we saw on Friday night was the culmination of a tremendous effort to bolster entrepreneurship and innovation in our region through STartUP Northshore, a truly unique program that's catalyzing entrepreneurship, innovation, and business formation in Tangipahoa, St. Tammany, and Washington Parishes," said **Ginger Cangelosi, Executive Director of Tangipahoa Economic Development**. "Tangipahoa Parish Economic Development was so proud to host this event in Downtown Hammond,



where four incredible entrepreneurs had the opportunity to make the case for their businesses surrounded by the startup community.”

The NSpire Startup Slam was made possible through the support and partnership of Chevron, Citizens National Bank, Cleco Power, Hancock Whitney Bank, the Northshore Community Foundation, Tangipahoa Economic Development Foundation, Stirling, and Northshore Media Group. Event partners included The Idea Village and Southeastern Louisiana University with special recognition going out to Dr. William Wainwright, President of Southeastern Louisiana University, Dr. Tará Lopez, Dean of the College of Business at Southeastern Louisiana University, and the staff at Columbia Theatre.

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About STartUP Northshore

STartUP Northshore is a three-year entrepreneurial ecosystem pilot program with the purpose of catalyzing entrepreneurship, innovation, and business formation on the Northshore through strategic partnerships with recognized entities in the startup community to deliver first-class programming for entrepreneurs and second stage companies. STartUP Northshore is supported through the collaboration of St. Tammany Corporation, Tangipahoa Economic Development, and Washington Economic Development Foundation. Through this initiative, the next wave of local entrepreneurs from all three parishes will gain access to immersive education, networking opportunities, access to capital and mentorship from esteemed industry leaders, investors, and founders, all of which come together to form a critical support system that will set their business up for success. STartUP Northshore is project managed by St. Tammany Corporation.

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