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In mid-September of this year Wayne County Economic Development Corporation announced a new initiative, KickStart Wayne County. On Wednesday November 20th, at the Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES Conference Center in Newark, 10 Wayne County entrepreneurs made their “pitch” to a panel of 5 judges for an award of \$40,000 in startup capital to “KickStart” their local business. David Murphy, a Newark resident, was selected at the inaugural winner for his invention “Load Alone”.

David is a lifelong resident of Wayne County and a 2nd generation funeral services business owner. In Murphy’s case, and stated in his pitch “necessity is the mother of invention”. After suffering a spinal cord injury in a motor vehicle accident in 2013, David was left unable to walk. Murphy learned to walk again, but found returning to work a struggle; predominantly in the lifting of the 100’s of pounds necessary for his business. That was the catalyst for his invention, **Load Alone**. <https://loadalone.com/>

Load Alone is a device that enables David to load over 500+ pounds by himself. Load Alone is available in a variety of sizes and models to suit the industry’s varying needs, and has several pending patents.

The Pitch competition is just part of the Kick Start Wayne County initiative that the WEDC hopes will inspire entrepreneurs to build and grow their businesses here in Wayne County.

“This is just one piece of the KickStart initiative” said Brian Pincelli, Executive Director of the Wayne Economic Development Corporation. “I’m really hoping to help develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the County. Events like tonight help bring people together, share ideas, give entrepreneurs a sense of community, and help us direct resources to potential business owners who might not be aware of all of the help and guidance available through our office and through our partner network, most of which is free!”

The Wayne County Economic Development Corporation sought entries for just under 4 weeks and narrowed down the initial 16 applications to 10 for the final pitch. The competition was open to Wayne County residents with a new business idea or are in the concept stage.

Three local companies committed to support this initiative with \$5,000 each, these Visionary Sponsors are; Lyons National Bank, EFPR Group, LLP and Harris Beach, PLLC. The Wayne County Economic Development Corporation also committed \$25,000 for a total prize of \$40,000.

Each finalist was given five minutes to make their “pitch” to the judging panel. The judges were then allowed 10 minutes for questions for each finalist.

“It was a fantastic event with tremendous help from our sponsors and judges” said Pincelli. “While it’s great to recognize a winner and help support their efforts to start their business, the whole event is really about bringing those great business ideas we know are out there to the table, and working with all of the applicants to help them take the steps necessary to make ideas reality.”

The Wayne County Economic Development Corporation hopes this will become a fall annual event. Please contact Tanya Hasseler, Business Outreach Coordinator at Wayne County Economic Development & Planning at thasseler@co.wayne.ny.us or call (315) 946-5975 regarding sponsorship or assistance with your Wayne County business.