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Five Women-Owned Businesses Each Awarded A \$5,000 Grant Totaling \$25,000

Sponsored by The Women's Fund of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Baird Private Wealth Management, UpMobility Foundation and the Griffiss Institute

November 13, 2024- (Rome, New York) For the third year in a row five women-owned businesses in Herkimer and Oneida Counties were each awarded \$5,000 to support the growth and development of their businesses. The grant initiative is made possible by The Women's Fund of Herkimer and Oneida Counties with support from Baird Private Wealth Management, UpMobility Foundation and the Griffiss Institute.

"This initiative to support women entrepreneurs in our area began in 2022," noted Ellen Rainey, board member of The Women's Fund and chairperson of the Women Investing in Women committee of the board. "Each year we have seen an outpouring of nominations, and this year was no exception. We had more than 60 women business owners apply. The applications represented a variety of businesses making the judging process exciting and challenging."

The grant applicants had to be 51 percent women-owned, located in Herkimer or Oneida Counties and in business for a minimum of one year.

"Baird Private Wealth Management has been a part of the Women Investing in Women grant program since the beginning," stated Michele Sheridan, Director and CFP Professional at Baird. "We work with dynamic and talented women in our community every day and its inspiring to see the growth in women-owned businesses. The grant nominees make a difference in our area and they also serve as role models for women and girls. At Baird we are proud to be a part of the growing number of women-owned businesses in our communities."

The 2024 award recipients are:

Live Well Fitness Health & Wellness Center, Little Falls/St. Johnsville – Kelly Daukontas. The company which began 2018 now has two locations and provides personal training, group fitness program and nutritional coaching. The company collaborates with other women-owned businesses that provide message therapy and

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chiropractic services. The grant will help provide new rubberized floors and equipment purchases.

Sarah Linder, LCSW, PC, Sherrill – specializing in ADHD evaluations for all ages and OCD and anxiety in children, the practice which began in 2015 has seen an increase in need in the area and has expanded services to online as well as in-person. The grant will be used to purchase additional hardware and software for testing ADHD and help expand the reach to support to individuals in the area.

Spring Creek Lavender, Remsen – Kara Keely and Jane Willis own and operate a multi-generational lavender and cut flower farm that provides u-pick lavender, onsite goat yoga, floral design and lavender retail products. Founded in 2018, the farm began with 800 plants and has grown to more than 2,000 lavender plants. The grant will provide for the continued development of a commercial kitchen and production/storage area.

Valentina's Alterations and Tailor Shop, Herkimer – Valentina Yudchits began modestly in 2003 and has grown to meet the high demands of Central New York. The shop services include sewing and alterations as well as creating clothing customized for each customer. The business which supports sustainability helps repair customers clothing enabling longer wear of favorite pieces. The grant will allow for the purchase of two new commercial sewing machines.

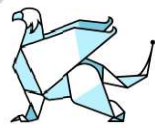
The Brownie Company, Utica – Samantha Arscott is a local business that specializes in brownie treats and homemade ice cream. With a strong sense of community, she buys products from local farms and vendors to create desserts. The company works with area businesses and individuals who order their products directly. A future goal is to purchase a food truck. The grant will provide additional commercial-grade baking equipment.

The award ceremony was held at Griffiss Institute in Rome, New York. Griffiss Institute attracts, develops and supports tech startup businesses in the Mohawk Valley and have worked with The Women's Fund on the grant program from its start in 2022.

“Supporting women-owned businesses is an essential part of cultivating our community's economic growth and resilience,” said Heather Hage, President and CEO of the Griffiss Institute. “By partnering with The Women's Fund and fellow supporters, we're empowering entrepreneurs who bring innovation, diversity, and passion to the Mohawk Valley. It's an honor to recognize their hard work and be part of their journey toward greater success.”

The event also gave a special “Rising Star” recognition to 15-year-old Emily Spatto. Ms. Spatto a 10th grader from Remsen is a young entrepreneur and children's book author.

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She began by writing a children’s book, Milo and Luna, Standing Out and Fitting In, which was published in March 2024 to raise money for her participation in the Miss Teen pageant. She also began baking chocolate chip cookies and selling them under the name Tasty Crown Bakery. While some of the funds have supported her personal development, she also gives back to the community including Upstate Caring Partners and shipping cookies to Marines overseas. You can follow Emily on her Instagram account Tasty Crown Bakery.

“Emily is an inspiring example of young entrepreneurs and business owners in the making,” stated Ellen Rainey of The Women’s Fund. “The mission of The Women’s Fund is supporting women and girls and she is an extraordinary example of the young women with drive and passion that we seek to lift up and support. She’s just beginning her entrepreneurial journey and we are excited to recognize her as young role model in our community.”

The Women’s Fund of Herkimer and Oneida Counties is grassroots, volunteer-driven non-for-profit which is funded by donor contributions. The Women’s Fund has gifted more than \$700,000 to individuals and organizations in their 27 years of service to Herkimer and Oneida Counties. For information visit The Women’s Fund at www.womensfundhoc.org.

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