



**COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
COLLABORATIVE**

**300 Preston Ave., Suite 206
Charlottesville, VA 22902**

EMPOWERING SMALL BUSINESS FOR BIG CHANGE



Last fall, CIC celebrated its 10-year anniversary with our first Alumni Reunion since 2019. It was an incredible event and opportunity to gather our community, reflect on the past and dream for the future.

The question that CIC started with 11 years ago was how to make capital more accessible. Since then, we've issued \$2.5 million in loans, guided 514 entrepreneurs through 24 cohorts of our signature program - the 16-week Entrepreneur Workshop - and assisted many others by providing supplemental support and opening up networks across the region. After lending \$2.5 million in 10 years, we're confident we can lend another \$3 million over the next 3 years. In that same time period, through CIC and SBDC services combined, we're hoping to serve at least 1500 entrepreneurs and help them access \$40 million in capital - not just from CIC, but from banks, investors, and other sources throughout our local area and beyond.

As we enter CIC's second decade, I think the next question has to be broader: what's getting in the way of more entrepreneurs dreaming bigger with their businesses?

A very wise graduate of our program shared that sometimes people can limit their dreams, or at least their goals, to what they think is achievable - achievable with the skills they currently have. Achievable because they've seen it done somewhere else. Achievable with the money they think they may have access to. We teach about SMART goals, where the A is achievable, but how do we assist them to envision MORE and then empower them to manifest it? How do we help more catering businesses that want to transition into full-service restaurants acquire the needed space(s) and open their doors? How do we help the skilled, single-member service businesses transition into those with an owner supported by a growing team of employees? How do we help more business owners scale their products beyond sales at farmers markets into local, regional or national stores? And most significantly, how does CIC dream bigger so that our efforts will help them realize those dreams? These are the questions we want to work on, the problems we want to solve. We hope you'll continue to partner with us to generate solutions for all of this and more.

We're thrilled to share our 2022 Annual Report as a brief snapshot of the work we do and the impact you've helped make possible through CIC. We invite you to explore dreams through the lenses of a few of our amazing entrepreneurs, and let's continue to collaborate to ensure these and so many others come to pass.

Thank you for all you do!

Stephen Davis,
President

MEET THE TEAM



STEPHEN DAVIS
President
CIC



SHANNON BEACH
Director of Programs
CIC



TEIRA E. FARLEY
Director of Communications & Engagement
CIC



CAROLINA MEDINA
Director of Lending & Operations
CIC



JUANA DENT
Program Coordinator
CIC



YVONNIA BRYANT
Development & Communications Coordinator
CIC



HANNAH DEAL
Operations Coordinator
CIC



CHRISTINE CALDWELL
Workshop & Outreach Coordinator
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REBECCA HAYDOCK
Director
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ARIEL BREDDER
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ROSI BEACHY
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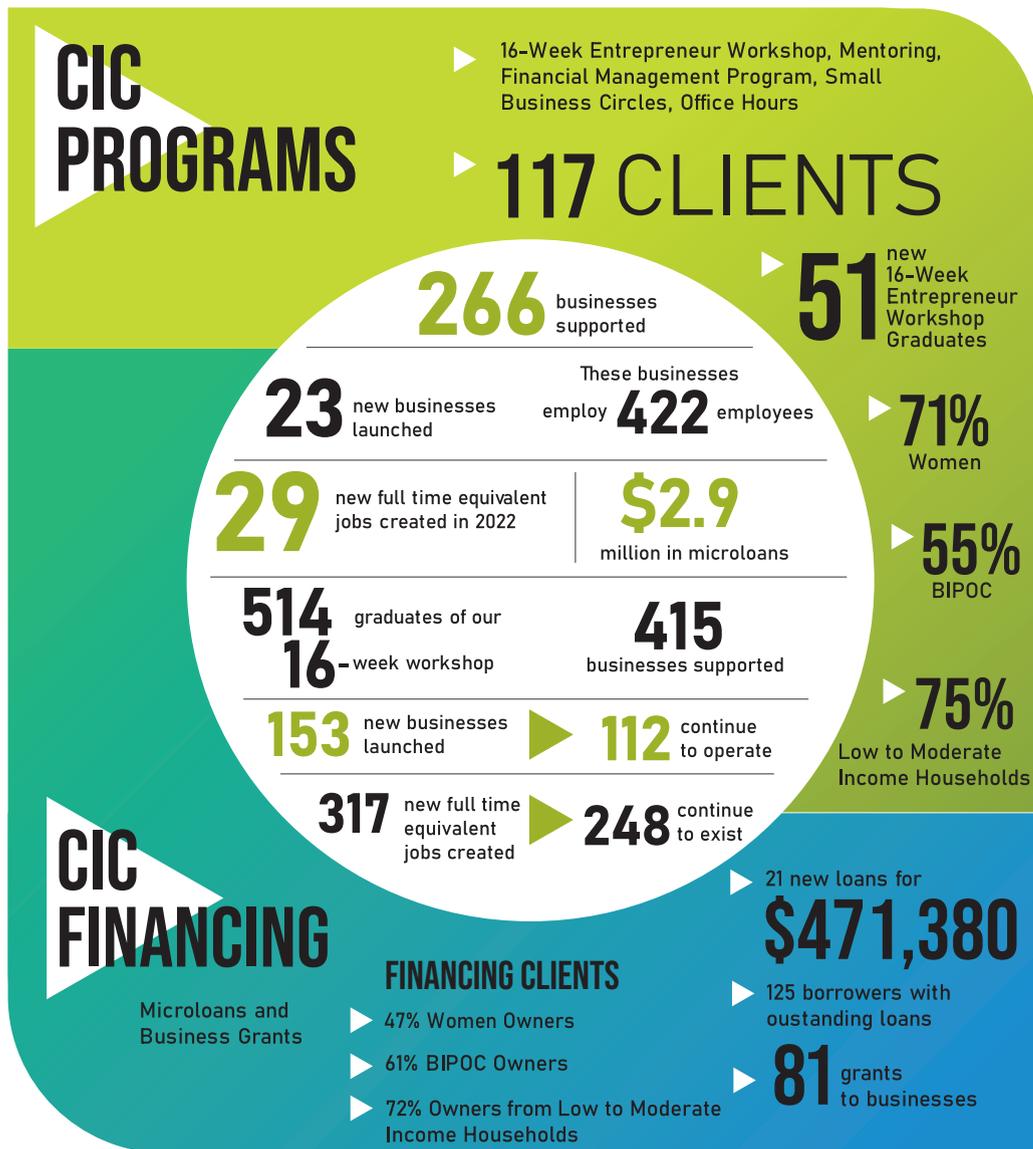


SHIRA GOLDEEN
Events Coordinator
CV SBDC



MESA MCMURTREY
Client Services Coordinator
CV SBDC

IMPACT CHART 2022



In that time, we have helped entrepreneurs generate nearly

\$30.442 MILLION

in wages from new jobs created, a return of investment of \$6.91 for every dollar CIC has spent.



AFTON COACH

Norman Daniel | aftoncoach.com

Afton Coach utilizes stylish, reliable, safe, and spacious vehicles, equipped with state-of-the-art features, to provide transportation services in Virginia and beyond.

Originally from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, Norman Daniel got into the car industry in 1992, "strictly by fluke," he says. He had been managing car dealerships since 1984 and attended an auction one day where he saw a small stretch limousine. He purchased it, took it back to the dealership and added it to the used car lot, thinking a cab company or someone might buy it. Instead, he continued to receive transportation requests.

Norman put a dealer tag on the limousine and sent it off with the lock boy. "It was only \$750 to get a business license. The next thing I knew, I had Angel Limousine," Norman reflects. "My mom was elderly and had a lifelong illness, so I eventually got a sedan and hired a driver just to take her to her doctor's appointments and so forth. Next thing you know, my aunts were calling, and their friends were calling. Everybody was calling. 15 years and dozens of employees later, by the time I was done, I had 15 or 16 vehicles. I was doing all kinds of stuff. Angel Limousines just took off and ran."

After many successful years of running Angel Limousine out of Cape Cod, Norman visited Virginia one weekend. Something about the area captivated him. "I came here from Cape Cod for a weekend 10 years ago with an overnight bag. I didn't grow up here. Didn't go to school here. Didn't go to church down here. I didn't know anybody, yet, it was 2 years before I actually went back home. I came here totally unexpectedly. I had to build a career, get a house, get a car, everything because I had nothing when I came. It was just supposed to be a weekend to hang out with an old Marine buddy of mine." Little did he know, it would transition into much more.

It was back in 2017 when Norman decided to retire from the car business; it lasted for about 2 weeks. Norman was bored stiff. That's when he built Afton Coach. Here in Virginia, he connected with the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) because it was the organization that helped him build Angel Limousine. "They actually helped me come up with the name Afton Coach," he explains. "Years and years ago, back in the cowboy days of the Nelson County area, there actually was a stagecoach line called Afton Coach. That's where the 'Afton' name came from. Everybody knows this is wine country out here, so the name alone helps me." The other benefit of providing transportation services in this area is that his closest competitor is 30 miles away; it keeps his business at an advantage.

Continuing his efforts to get Afton Coach off the ground, Norman sought more resources in the Charlottesville area. He connected with CIC through SCORE. In the Fall of 2017, he enrolled in the **Entrepreneur Workshop** and was off to a great start. "I started Afton Coach with nothing. All I had was \$1000 bucks, a credit card and turned it into six figures per year in sales. In my first year, I did \$62,000 in sales with one vehicle. By the end of my second year, I had three vehicles and was

doing \$200,000 in sales. And by my third year, during COVID, I still was able to increase my sales. Every single year I've been in business has been better than the previous year. And being a one-man operation, I'm kind of giddy."

To stay afloat during the pandemic, Norman was forced to think outside of the box. When the airports, train stations, bus stations, and everything shut down, people still needed to get around, so he decided he'd travel a 12-hour radius, about 600 miles out. Providing door-to-door, top-quality service, he went on jobs as far as Tennessee, New York, and Ohio. He also went to local car repair shops, tow companies, and police departments to tell people about his work, which turned into more service for him. "To this day, I still get calls. There are no taxis, Lyfts, or Ubers out here in Nelson County, but people still need car service. It's a matter of finding out what's in the area - the available resources - and utilizing them, along with your own creativity."

Leveraging support from the **CIC COVID Relief Loan program** also helped Norman get through the pandemic. "That extra capital helped me tremendously! It gave me breathing room to get equipment, work on my cash flow, and get a little bit more established. It helped me with marketing and setting up my website."

A former Marine, Norman takes pride in what he does and even operates the business like a battalion. He trains each of his staff members to be prompt, well-dressed, well-mannered, and ready to provide quality service to every client. The biggest challenge for him right now is maintaining Afton Coach as a one-man show, which he no longer wants to do.

Norman is currently receiving free, **1:1 business advising through the CV SBDC** with hopes of coming up with a new business model that will aid the growth and expansion of Afton Coach. "I can't go backwards, forward, left, or right because I've outgrown being a one-man operation - which is a nice thing. I'm still stressed and worried, but God gave me a brain, two hands, and a strong back. Nothing can stop me. If you can conceive an idea and believe in the idea, then you will achieve that idea. Our only obstacle is ourselves. Once we get out of our own way, we can get things done. But again, having programs like CIC, SBDC, and SWaM, and others, how can you not at least make an effort? CIC has helped so many people, including me, and continues to do amazing work."

In addition to the resources, Norman credits the community as the foundation for his continued success. "If it weren't for local folks, I wouldn't have survived COVID. They are what kept Afton Coach going. I try to take care of my neighbors because they helped feed me." Norman's advice to other entrepreneurs in the community is to put together a business plan and stick to it, don't exceed your means, and support other CIC businesses.

RIVANNA RIVER COMPANY

Gabe + Sonya Silver | rivannarivercompany.com

Rivanna River Company is a paddle sports outfitting and guide service on the scenic Rivanna River.



"What is it that attracts people to Charlottesville?", you might ask. For some, it's to explore wine country, as the city is surrounded by wineries and vineyards. Others seek to learn about the area's rich history, visiting the University of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson's Monticello. For outdoor lovers, it's the unique green space, hiking trails, and the Rivanna River that draw them in.

Meet Gabe and Sonya Silver, the owners of the Rivanna River Company. They are Charlottesville natives and a husband-wife team who have always loved spending time outdoors and decided to turn their passions into something more. Gabe and Sonya were both in environmental education and outdoor leadership roles in their post-college years. Eventually, Sonya went back to school to become a nurse, while Gabe ended up in carpentry and construction. Although they loved what they did, they shared similar feelings that something was still missing. Sonya shares, "When we moved back to Charlottesville, we really kind of rediscovered and fell in love with the Rivanna River again. We felt like there was a real lack of connection between the town and the river. We had already been throwing around an idea of some sort of river center in some place on some river, so coming back to the river we both know

and love felt like, 'Oh, this is the moment – this is it.'" From that realization, Gabe and Sonya put in the work to bring the Rivanna River Company to life.

In 2015, Gabe enrolled in the **Entrepreneur Workshop** to figure out how to run a business. At the time, they had a baby girl, so while Gabe attended class every Tuesday night, Sonya stayed home to care for her. When it came time for homework, they went through all the assignments together because they were all in – together. Gabe explains, "I don't know why anyone wouldn't take the class. If you have a business already and you want to do better, or you think you might want to have a business, there's no way to spend three and a half months, in a more impactful way. It makes you think critically about your idea with new people with new minds who are very experienced in different realms. And it's also a really diverse space. There are people you're going to meet there that you just wouldn't necessarily meet otherwise because CIC does such an amazing job of bringing together people from all walks. I think it is one of the most kind, joyful and hopeful spaces that I've been in Charlottesville." After completing the Workshop, Gabe went on to volunteer as a **workgroup leader**, describing it as a



"really great experience, especially to be able to participate in the Workshop from that perspective."

Continuing their journey of getting their business off the ground, they competed in **Tom Tom Festival's Crowdfunded Pitch Night**, an annual pitch competition for entrepreneurs to showcase their business concepts in front of a live audience who pledge funds towards their favorite startups. "That was a pretty crucial stepping stone for us. It made us take our quietly held idea and talk about it in front of groups of people – other people who were entrepreneurs, friends, strangers, various target markets, and other business owners," Gabe describes. "It was like a garden walk of stepping stones towards organically getting to the point of, 'I guess we're doing this now.' When we started, it was an idea, and then we were suddenly in motion. We even got an investor out of the Tom Tom Crowdfunded Pitch Night." Sonya felt similarly, sharing, "That night for us felt like a turning point. I feel like we owe a lot to CIC for getting us there. When we got up on that stage for our pitch, Gabe and I looked at each other and said, 'I guess we have to do this.' We had just told a lot of people we were gonna do this, and it just really helped us kind of focus on why people should care and what the essence of what we were trying to do was. It was powerful for us. I feel like people heard it, and it was really well received and definitely kind of lit a fire under us."

Gabe and Sonya have now been operating the Rivanna River Company for the last eight years and hope to continue their steady growth. It's become a major part of their mission and success to provide a welcoming gathering space on the riverfront, so they host about a dozen events each year, such as concerts and river festivals, that draw 500-1000 people. To build off of that, their ultimate goal in the next three to five years is to build a home base facility where they are currently located to support an outfitting structure and a food and drink component. They are starting to feel "ready" but are also not trying to jump into it too quickly. So, for now, Gabe and Sonya are focusing on making their location more inviting and beautiful, all while cultivating a staff team that provides 5-star customer service.





SWEET ART EMPORIUM

Erika Mitchell | sweetartemporium.com

Sweet Art Emporium is a gift shop specializing in locally crafted fine art and Virginia-made sweets, located in Fluvanna County, VA.

For years, Erika Mitchell was working in what she describes as a low-level human services position, doing what she could to help others, but continually putting her own dreams on hold. She always had a love for art. She had even studied it in the past, but she'd never explored it professionally as a career to support her livelihood and a path to become her own boss. Despite having an entrepreneurial spirit, she didn't have the confidence to try it out.

The stress of human services was starting to impact her health. Beyond the benefits and the security of the consistent paycheck, working for others was no longer serving her needs. So, after a conversation with her husband, they decided it wasn't wise for her to continue on that path and she quit her job. But what next? Being unemployed and stressed wasn't healthy either, so she needed to shift, but to what? Where? Most importantly, HOW?!

A month into unemployment, she walked into an antique/art store, only to learn that it was closing. As she sat down and looked around, she began to visualize an art store that better represented the talent in her community. She realized that she wanted to take it over and begin creating again. She set to work on a plan with the current owner and Sweet Art Emporium was born!

Fluvanna's own art oasis, Erika represents local artists, including herself. She hosts their work and enjoys the conversations that take place in the shop, regardless of sales. Her focus is on building relationships and curated experiences. "Art allows for that. I believe the connections are the most important and special part of my shop. I love providing a space where people can come together," she says.

ERIKA + CIC

Erika heard about CIC long before it occurred to her that she would be a good match. Someone who worked for Fluvanna County Economic Development sent out an email to remind the community that it was their very last chance to apply for the [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) that semester. She was originally nervous about being "official" enough and paying the tuition, but she applied, was admitted and received a scholarship.

Erika credits her participation in the [Entrepreneur](#)

[Workshop](#) for the confidence to call herself a business woman. The experience validated the things she was already doing right, despite not having any formal business training. It was helpful to be able to establish a solid foundation and meet people in her own community that were attempting to build their own businesses. "With CIC, I learned that networking is the absolute most important thing you can do as an entrepreneur, but you also have to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves," she says. "I also learned that the most successful entrepreneurs take multiple small risks, they don't take one huge risk. Every time I'm thinking about a decision, I remind myself of that nugget; it helps me to continuously measure my choices and not get carried away with them."

In addition to completing the [Entrepreneur Workshop](#), Erika received a [microgrant](#) and enrolled in CIC's [Financial Management Program \(FMP\)](#) to get a better understanding of her financial situation and what she needed to produce in sales in order to sustain the business and her lifestyle. One of the biggest differences she notes is that she's now actually trying to pay herself. Initially, she was selling her artwork, but not allowing the business to be a source of income for her life. She's made some adjustments and still utilizes the break-even analysis she received from CIC to better manage overhead.

Erika hopes to continue increasing profitability. She remains connected to CIC and has been approved for a [microloan](#) to fund a larger location. She's dramatically increased the number of artists she's representing and started a new income stream that allows customers to paint their own ceramics whenever the shop is open. Because of its uniqueness in the Fluvanna area, this venture offers her an opportunity to generate funds that are not commission-based.

When asked to share advice to someone considering applying to the [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) or participating in other CIC programs, Erika says, "It's all about confidence and validity. When you're in school, you're always asked about who you are, who you're going to be and what you're going to do, but entrepreneurship and owning a small business isn't typically a consideration. Many feel it's outside of the scope of what's possible, but people must see themselves as worthy of being invested in. Community members who are willing to work hard but don't have opportunities dropping in their laps are exactly the type of people CIC is looking for. They do a great job getting people to recognize that their own potential is one of their greatest assets."

THE GO BAR

Leah + Wond | mobilegobar.com

The Go Bar is a mobile bar offering specialized service, incredible style, & delicious drinks at personal and corporate events and celebrations.



In the event space, having a good time is just as important as being on time, so they make it happen time and time again. Leah + Wond recognize the value in curating special events and creative experiences. They know the power of a drink and a smile and they're committed to bringing more of both to the Charlottesville community. The Go Bar isn't just a trailer on the back of a truck, it's a vibe, it's an energy, it's a specialized service formulated by two "dreamers, drink specialists and facilitators of celebration & style."

Juxtaposed with education-focused families whose members excelled with multiple degrees, Leah + Wond initially followed the expected, traditional paths, traveling down the path of higher education. There was never any expressed pressure to do it, but more so a subliminal message that it was the way they should go. Leah holds a bachelor's degree in special education with a focus on the autism spectrum and a masters in restorative justice in education while Wond possesses degrees in history and religion, coupled with extensive research at James Madison University. He was a special-education teacher; she was a therapist. The unexpected common denominator? They were both bartending on the side.

There was a shared desire for freedom, autonomy, a sense of agency and longing for impact, but bartending had often been publicly disregarded. It wasn't considered "real work", more so a side gig. The dismissal of their chosen profession based upon its perception in the world caused them to grapple with their self-awareness. She always knew she wanted to own her own business and he knew that he wanted to do something they were good at, but a brick and mortar location was a huge risk, that required major capital and had minimal success rates. What about a bar that could travel, like a food truck, and take the "guaranteed

fun" experience wherever the occasion warranted? Hmm... why not?

CIC had been on their radar for a while. Todd Mosley, TJ, told Wond about the people and the program, and encouraged him to look it up online. Toan, one of CIC's founders, owner of Cville Coffee, and a friend of the family had mentioned the [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) several times. Despite some initial trepidation regarding the idea itself, they applied, spoke with a couple of team members, and participated in the Entrepreneur Workshop together. They were paired in the same workgroup, completed homework assignments as a team, and worked collaboratively with the other entrepreneurs they'd met. Mission accomplished.

The Go Bar owners went on to receive a [microgrant](#) that allowed them to purchase equipment for the trailer and assisted with its maintenance. They also took advantage of [Office Hours](#), virtually w/ Ann Thompson, and the Collaborative space because of its convenience.

Before aligning with CIC, Leah + Wond had no idea that Charlottesville held its entrepreneurs so well, that CIC was a network with a depth of support. They regarded the workshop as a condensed business course, but more than just a class, they believe it is a support system. "It's truly phenomenal how the people of CIC hold the clients in such high regard. We trust that. We trust them. Relationships don't end with the class; that's just where it starts. It's actually so amazing how big the network is and how beneficial the connections are. We are proud alumni who rave about CIC whenever we get the opportunity," says Leah.





Now, they are taking bartending gigs w/o the trailer, offering independent bar service, and on the vendor list at UVA and specialty groups in the city. In three to five years, they hope to be retrofitting a second trailer and creating a program for contracting bartenders because of the manual labor and time needed per gig. They are hoping they will not physically be bartending themselves, but have someone managing it, creating a network of bartenders. They want to maintain a specialty experience and for the bartenders to feel as if they are a part of something bigger, not just tending the bar. It's intended to be like a community, more than just a job. They are looking into applying for a microloan to assist them in expanding their business and hiring additional staffing to service their ever-growing list of events.

Despite their success, the couple cautions entrepreneurs about taking on too much too fast. "Don't think it's smart to leave your job until you see the growth in your business," Leah advises. Wond adds, "Follow the business and be honest with where the business is. Initially, if you can, try to hold off on getting a business loan; maintaining other employment allows for that. Assess the needs of your life versus the business and recognize when someone needs to devote more time to the business. Then, make the moves." The business began in June 2021. Leah is full-time as of March 2023.

"Being an entrepreneur is challenging and rewarding. It is one of the best moves I've ever made and has transformed my life and my experience in the world, exponentially. I am living my passions. I am owning my creativity. I am, without a doubt, living my best life with the person who is right for me. We're doing this together. The joy it brings is the abundance I'm living for and I am grateful for it everyday," Leah says. Wond gently adds, "The community we've experienced with CIC, their commitment and outreach for the larger local

community is bigger than us and it feels good to be a part of that bigger picture."



NOBULL BURGER

Elizabeth Raymond | nobullburger.com

NoBull Burger is the TRUE veggie burger that takes pride in using premium, real-food ingredients, offering exceptionally tasting plant-based protein made from 100% plants and 0% bull.



Imagine Crissanne Raymond, a single parent raising her children, working full-time and making lunches they all loved, not because of chips, cookies, sodas or brownies, but because they included her original recipe for a veggie burger that tasted great and most importantly, was healthy. Of course it belonged in grocery stores!

Elizabeth Raymond and her family knew how different her mom's recipes were. They had eaten Crissanne's creations for years. They knew how great a product the NoBull Burger was and how helpful it would be for the market. The benefits of a plant-based diet were no longer debatable. The industry was shifting and awareness was building. It was time. The authenticity of the product, having a plant protein option that didn't make customers compromise on flavor was the distinction that gave them the courage to launch.

The need for her to quit her job and become a full-time employee of the business happened organically when they started seeing the growth in demand for their product and from the industry. They had to consider scaling. They couldn't run it as a mom and pop shop anymore, so Elizabeth assumed the VP role, applied to CIC, began learning more about fundraising and became more aggressive with strategic business development.

The business was 5-years-old when Elizabeth was admitted to participate in the [Entrepreneur Workshop](#). "It was a great way for my mind to adjust and reaffirm what

I was trying to do from a structured perspective," she reflects. "This project, this business is about helping people. It's a legacy project for my family. We knew there was a destined path and that we wanted to take it as far as we could, but we had no idea of what that looked like or what that would entail. We were determined to keep going until we reached the next milestone. CIC's [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) became a part of that."

After graduating from the workshop, Elizabeth joined a [CIC Small Business Circle \(SBC\)](#) with Honie Ann and remained active for years because it offered close-knit emotional support, beyond the workshop, that encouraged her in the midst of business fluctuations and growing pains. She also served as a workgroup leader with the [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) to offer her experience first hand to others embarking down the entrepreneurship trail.

"Entrepreneurship is so glorified these days. Yes, there are benefits, but many people who have not walked it don't understand the weight that sits on your shoulders. It can be a lonely and extremely challenging journey, with high highs and low lows. You have to learn how to maintain in the midst of it all," Elizabeth says. "Be really grounded in yourself, make healthy decisions from a resourced self versus a reactive self. Use tools to assist



with decision making. Remember to go inward, through prayer or meditation, to be quiet for a while and search within yourself before asking others."

Although they had been consistently applying, it was a ten year journey between NoBull Burger's first placement in a Charlottesville store to obtaining national distribution with Whole Foods. They actually started getting orders from their distributor that originated from new vendors before they received the official notice. "That part happened extremely fast," she smiles and says. 2023 will be their first year seeing it in full distribution. "It has truly been a roller coaster, but I wouldn't change anything. If I knew the difficulties, I may have talked myself out of it beforehand," says Elizabeth. "You must have resilience. You will always be told no more than you will be told yes. Knowing where your lines are and where you're willing to negotiate helps you navigate."

Elizabeth hopes the NoBull Burger journey can serve as an inspiration to others who don't come from credentials and pedigree, that she's encouraging others to believe they can do it too. She didn't have a background in business, supply chain management or development. She didn't know about financial projections or fundraising, but appreciated learning it all along the way. She believes knowledge can be obtained through lived experiences if you surround yourself with mentors and



collaborators who can challenge you and expose you to new experiences. "That's the beauty of places like CIC, always such a light. They are always first to recommend you to new entrepreneurs and opportunities. The way they support the community, you're bound to come out stronger," says Elizabeth. "Go for it. If you're scared, always look behind the fear to see what it stems from. Stay hyper-focused on YOUR path so that you're not overwhelmed or swayed. Evaluate goals and decisions from a values and business aspect, not an emotional one. Maintain a healthy sense of awareness, but don't lose the present moment or ignore progress and opportunities to celebrate the wins. CIC is going to be there with you every step of the way."

CIC IS TESTING AN EXPANSION OF ITS MICROLOAN SERVICE AREA TO OFFER ACCESS TO CAPITAL TO ENTREPRENEURS BEYOND GREATER CHARLOTTESVILLE AND ITS SURROUNDING COUNTIES. IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS, CIC HAS MADE LOANS TO ENTREPRENEURS IN MARTINSVILLE AND RICHMOND AND HOPES TO SUPPORT MORE ENTREPRENEURS IN THIS CAPACITY.

RUDY'S GIRL MEDIA

Natalie Hodge | rudysgirl.com

Rudy's Girl Media is a black woman-owned production studio based in Martinsville, VA.

Natalie K. Hodge, the owner, and creator of Rudy's Girl Media, had a passion for the entertainment industry at a young age. She first explored her interest in film and television while living in New York, where she initially aspired to become an actor. However, after working as a background actor and studying the craft, she realized that her heart was in writing and developing projects. She shares, "I really love the entertainment industry. I love television. I don't love acting. So I dabbled in a bunch of different spaces, and writing was the place that I landed, like, that's my heart."

She began producing smaller projects to get her name out there as a new writer, eventually leading her to relocate to Los Angeles, California. She says, "I was doing work in both New York and LA and then ended up moving back to my hometown, which is Martinsville, VA. I started the company here with the vision initially that I would be filming projects in New York, LA, and Atlanta. But life happened, and I just wasn't able to make that travel commitment. So I started doing the work here. The first short film I filmed here was in 2019, and I have had subsequent projects."

In 2022, Natalie won a business competition called the Gauntlet, one of the largest pitch competitions in the state. Doing so provided her with the resources to open a studio in Martinsville's uptown area. Since then, Natalie and her team have been working on various projects in the new studio. "People are kind of shocked when I give them the rundown of Rudy's Girl Media because it has been a whole journey, but you know every step is worthwhile."

As part of her work, Natalie prides herself in being able to give back to her community, describing it as "helping other people to connect, where they are at this moment to where they want to be." She always seeks to find opportunities and offerings she can pass off to other entrepreneurs in her network, leading her to learn about RISE Collaborative, a regional entrepreneurship and innovation initiative serving entrepreneurs and



small businesses in rural Southern Virginia. After engaging with the RISE Collaborative community, they ended up becoming a sponsor for Hometown Hustle Season 2. They also host conferences, including one in 2022, where Stephen (our President) spoke about CIC and the expansion of the microloan program; it was no longer limited to Charlottesville and graduates of the Entrepreneur Workshop. Natalie thought to herself, "Oh my gosh! We don't have financing programs like this back home. This is a prayer answered." She emailed Stephen that same day, applied, and became the first entrepreneur and small business owner to receive a CIC microloan in Southside, Virginia.

Natalie says, "We're in an older, historic building in the commercial business district. So there were lots of things that needed to be fine-tuned and that really stretched the budget we had. If you budget \$1 for something, it actually costs \$5 when you get down to it. When I was introduced to CIC, we had secured equipment and furniture, but I hadn't got everything I needed because I had to be conscious of expenses. When that check hit, I was able to round out the equipment purchases that I needed for the business. And then there was the opportunity to have some operational funding, which was important because, you know, we're working on projects but have to pay for things as we're doing that."



PENNY'S WINE SHOP

Kristen Gardner + Lance Lemon | pennysrva.com

Penny's Wine Shop is a brick-and-mortar, curated space for community, palate exploration, and conversation, offering natural wine, small plates, and a seasonal menu brought to you by two native childhood friends.

Kristen Gardner Beal and Lance Lemon, long-time friends and the masterminds behind Penny's Wine Shop in Richmond, VA, were inspired by their first wine company, RichWine, which was created with the goal of sourcing clean-farmed wine from around the world and bringing it back to the Richmond community, via a delivery-based company.

Kristen's background in foreign affairs and sociology led her to work for the Department of State before transitioning to a 10-year career in banking and corporate lending. Whenever she had vacation time, she made it a priority to explore wine regions across the globe. Her business partner, Lance, who is an actor, worked in the restaurant industry and had experience building two small wine shops in New York. Accidentally becoming neighbors in New York and sharing a mutual passion for wine, the duo put their heads together and created RichWine.

Initially, Kristen and Lance planned to establish a brick-and-mortar bottle shop where people could visit and shop for wine. However, due to the circumstances of the pandemic, they decided to launch as a delivery-based business in 2020. Kristen explains, "It's the same great grapes that folks know and are familiar with." In the process of building RichWine, Kristen and Lance tasted over 400 wines to curate their collection. RichWine offers a wide selection of familiar grapes, unique blends, and specific varietals from different

regions worldwide, aiming to cater to every wine enthusiast. Over time, the business evolved into a delivery service, allowing customers to order online and conveniently receive their wine Mondays through Thursdays.

As their online business thrived, Kristen and Lance decided to transition from solely operating as a delivery service to establishing a physical location. However, they needed additional capital to bring their vision to life. Despite Kristen's corporate lending background and good credit, they faced disappointment when banks required more years of business operation than they had to offer in order to obtain loan approval.

Kristen and Lance reconnected with the Jackson Ward Collective to get insight into more resources in the community that support entrepreneurs and would be willing to invest in their business. From there, they connected with Leah at Bridging Virginia, who brought in CIC. Together, the two organizations provided Kristen and Lance with **\$100,000 in capital** to fund the buildout of their Brick and Mortar wine shop – Penny's. In February of 2023, Penny's Wine Shop officially opened its doors, fulfilling Kristen and Lance's dream.

LET'S ASK THE ENTREPRENEURS!

WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU WISH YOU KNEW BEFORE YOU STARTED?

LEAH: I wish I had more training and understanding about Quickbooks, taxes, and financial organizational strategies. I'm still learning – I just think this is a critical aspect to monitoring and understanding more deeply the business financial umbrella.

WOND: I wish I knew how real the feeling of impostor syndrome is. I wish I had known how real the fear would be when opening the business so I was better prepared to push back at it.

WHAT'S A COMMON MISCONCEPTION ABOUT ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

ERIKA: I make a lot of small donations to other organizations, but there is a lot of expectation that small businesses are able to do that when in most cases it is not easy. It should be appreciated and recognized as such. Many don't realize how hard earned each dollar is. I wish people had a better understanding of how much small businesses contribute to the local community.

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE FEAR AND DOUBT THAT ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAN SOMETIMES BRING?

SONYA: What has carried us through more than anything is believing in what we do. It's in our hearts and souls. We believe in it, so it feels worth it – even with all these moments of stress and doubt. We know there's value here, and we know it to our core, but we also hear it from people all the time. I mean, this community of people supports us and shows up time and time again. You know, it just really helps us get through all of this.

KRISTEN: I'm a religious person, so I pray a lot and decide that I'm not going to worry about anything. I also have to decide if something is an annoyance or a problem. If it's an annoyance, it can be fixed within 20 to 30 minutes if you spend the time. A problem requires you to sit down and think about a solution, and with owning a business, we may take a couple of days to really put our heads down and work through it. So I really do have to decide, like going into a headspace wise, where we truly are and operate from there. But I think that when the hard times do come up or when we have to make changes, and a lot of it too is not necessarily how we've designed our business, but it's kind of like, alright, we're in a business where we have to keep people happy and you can't please everyone because, you know, sometimes people just want more and more and more but that goes it's kind of like the bottom line of your business or that goes against what's sustainable for your business. And you have to say no, knowing that you may lose this individual you may lose a talent, but like that's okay. You know, because there are just ways to work around the hard things. You just have to remind yourself that all of these problems will pass and will be resolved instantly or over time.

GABE: This is a practical thing, but I can build houses, and Sonya can be a nurse and that is a pretty steady fallback. So if something were to go seriously, belly up, we could just fall back on those skills, which is a really reassuring perspective. I don't think we think about that a lot because we really try to stay focused on pushing forward with this endeavor because that's where our hearts are. But in terms of any problems with the river company that we need help with, we found a very willing and receptive community of people who want to help us along the way – and most people have come through CIC. In fact, coming out of the Entrepreneur Workshop we were hooked up with a mentor who gave freely of his time and offered really great advice for the first couple of years we operated to help keep us on pace with our planning and everything.

NORMAN: I'm able to stay motivated because I know it can be done. I've experienced running a business already. I've seen it, done it, and been there. I've been through worse times with less money, and it all still worked out. That's my driving force – the taste of success and knowing that it feels a lot better than failing. Failing is not an option. Success feels nice. And knowing that nice feeling is a hell of a motivator. The market situation is the same now as it was when I had with Angel Limousine. The economy is down. Everything is down. But yet – I was able to make Angel Limousine work and keep it going. Why can't I do it again with Afton Coach? You can put all the hurdles you want in front of me, but I believe in what I'm doing. I've got too much invested to not make it work.





HOW DO YOU DECIDE IF SOMETHING IS RIGHT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

LEAH: Finding what is 'right' for your business is a transformative process. It is ongoing. It shifts over time. It can be taxing and exhausting – as partners you may even disagree – so it means taking time to sit at the table together with your ideas, thoughts, and questions. It means having an open mind and listening ears. It means having the capacity to see from different lenses that are other than your own. It might mean asking specific questions to follow up with a thought about a 'right' move or decision. Such as, is this move affordable? Sustainable? Does it align with our central value system? Where do we see flexibility within this? Or is it immovable? Will it cause harm to others? To ourselves? Or will it reflect who we say we are? Does this support transparency in our business practices? etc.

WOND: One of the ways is by putting emphasis on the value of client reviews. Those reviews can inform you when something is 'right' and/or working well for people we serve.

WHAT PIVOTS HAVE YOU HAD TO MAKE SINCE LAUNCHING YOUR BUSINESS CONSIDERING COVID19, INFLATION, ETC?

NATALIE: It took much longer for us to get the studio up and running because we would order supplies, that were essential for one project but also needed for projects down the line, that would take forever to deliver because of the delays in shipping. All the while, of course, bills did not stop. So that was a true strain on the process. We were fortunate that the community is a super supporter of what we're doing. At one point, Carter Bank & Trust came in as a sponsor for a social media segment called "Hustle Tips" that we ran, and that's those sponsorship dollars. It was just like a creative response to a financial need, and also, they wanted to get their messaging out into the community, so it was a win-win situation.

IS THE CUSTOMER ALWAYS RIGHT?

GABE: The customer is not always right because there are some of them that are just factually wrong. That being said, the customer always deserves to feel they have your support and appreciation.

SONYA: We have trained our staff, and this has been our motto all along, if there's a complaint, just give them their money back. If they're upset about something they didn't like, even something you don't agree with, it's just not worth it, you know? It's \$49. Just give them their money back. So in that regard, we're not going to try to talk them out of how they feel.

HOW DO YOU BALANCE ENTREPRENEUR WORK W/ LIFE, FAMILY, AND OTHER GOALS? WHAT ARE SOME BOUNDARIES THAT HAVE BEEN HELPFUL?

LEAH: This is a huge task – in particular, when you don't have a brick and mortar space outside your own home. I think one thing that can create a healthy boundary is sharing openly with close friends and family what your demands look like when you seemingly aren't clocked in at a space outside your home. Creating real time work hours is important. Creating availability that allows for personal time when it comes to working with clientele. Being intentional about engaging in activities and ways of being that bring you joy – for me that is cooking and thinking about food – finding time in nature or reading books – spending quality time with friends, even if that means FaceTime with friends who are far away. For us as a couple, it means finding time for Just us – to go on a date or a walk. It means finding time to laugh with one another while we're working. The life-giving things we choose to bring into our days and moments will re-energize and keep the fire lit in our passion for life and will to keep going.

WOND: It could have been helpful to have better planning strategies, dedicating specific days for time with family/friends, particularly my daughters, that would have been a helpful strategy for creating boundaries and one I would suggest to others.

IS THERE ANY ADVICE YOU WISH TO SHARE?

NATALIE: I would say my advice for people is – shop small by supporting small businesses. One of the resounding themes that came up in filming the most recent season of Hometown Hustle is that small business owners mentioned sponsoring Little League teams or supporting Girl Scouts, a local chapter. So they do all of these things that give back, and then they feel a level of hurt when people order T-shirts from some nameless corporation and not local vendors. So you know someone mentioned specifically like Amazon is not gonna sponsor a little league team in your community, but my company will, so consider that when you're spending dollars. So I would say that is my big advice. Shop small, shop local, and understand that your small businesses are making an impact on everything that's happening in the community, and we pay taxes, we're at local events, we're neighbors, so it's important for us to be able to survive and thrive.

NORMAN: I love working with county, state, and government programs. I've worked with SBA and other agencies. It's very useful and very helpful. It's our tax dollars at work that pay for them, so "use them!"

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2022	2021
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,286,668	\$1,136,570
Outstanding Loans (Net of 15% allowance for loan loss reserve)	\$923,820	\$857,843
Accounts and grants receivable	\$244,822	\$239,906
Property and Equipment	\$152,456	\$98,995
Prepaid Expenses	\$10,260	
Other Assets	\$2,058	\$2,058
Total Assets	\$2,620,084	\$2,335,372
Current Liabilities	\$48,517	\$26,514
Operating Lease Liability	\$53,690	
Loan Payable	\$300,000	\$300,000
Total Liabilities	\$402,207	\$326,514
Net Assets with donor restrictions	\$1,346,553	\$1,236,800
Net Assets without donor restrictions	\$871,324	\$772,058
Total liabilities and Net Assets	\$2,620,084	\$2,335,372

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Revenue		
Public Support	\$944,878	\$793,858
Government Support	\$1,042,364	\$1,708,268
Program Income	\$79,535	\$103,900
New Loan Funds	\$175,000	\$232,232
Interest Earnings	\$2,319	\$653
Total Revenue	\$2,244,096	\$2,838,911
Expenses		
CIC Programs	\$613,695	\$516,174
Financing & Loan Programs	\$598,318	\$1,409,990
--Grants to businesses	\$450,332	\$1,048,572
--Loan Loss Provision	\$10,000	\$0
CVSBDC Programs	\$613,695	\$341,081
Management and General	\$102,146	\$47,627
Fundraising	\$97,916	\$71,512
Total Expenses	\$2,035,077	\$2,386,384
Change in Net Assets	\$209,019	\$452,527

CIC SUPPORTERS

Visionary Partners

Aaron and Candice Hark	Charles and Anne Thacher	Sonjia Smith
Albemarle County Economic Development Authority	Charles Lawrence Keith and Clara Miller Foundation	Truist
Anonymous (2)	City of Charlottesville	United Way of Greater Charlottesville
Bama Works Fund at CACF	Elizabeth Willingham	Virginia Cenedella
Bank of America	Hartfield Foundation	Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development
Capital One	S&P Global	Wells Fargo
CDFI Fund at U.S. Department of Treasury	Sentara	Wendy Brown
	Small Business Administration	William Dittmar

Dream Makers

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Mac and Elsie Thompson	Wistar Morris and Karen Moran

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DoodyCalls	Jay Lester	Paul Beyer	Virginia National Bank
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Ellen Joy	Jennifer Jones	Peter McHugh and Louise McNamee	Zakiya Toirova
Ellen Martin	Jessica Tiller and Tim Johnson	Phillip Riese	
	Jon Copper		

CIC VOLUNTEERS

Workgroup Leaders

Angelic Jenkins	Jessy George
Audrey Skinner	Kitty Calloway
Carolyn Herbert	Lauren Ryan
James Culmer	Sherry Bryant
Jeshurun Plumb	

Discussion Leaders

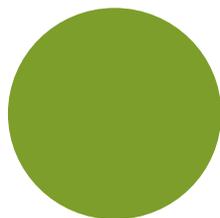
Ajoni Wynn-Floyd	Joshua René
Andrea Copeland	Mark Cartwright
Ann Marie Hohenberger	Kristen Rabourdin
Barbara Kessler	Robin Kackza
Bill O'Malley	Shizuka Modica
David Touve	Virginia Leary
Danielle Hopkins	Zachary Jackson
Hope Lawrence	Zenas Choi
Janasha "Jay" Bradford	

Mentors

Bill O'Malley	Laura Horn
Charlotte Robertson	Robin Kackza
James Watson	Steve Liberman
Kate Zuckerman	Trevor Shand
Kirsten Ashbaugh	

Additional Volunteers

Alexandra Littlehales	Greg Dorazio	Mac Thompson
Ann Thompson	Jacob D'Aniello	Max Mohr
Anne Brown	Jamee Dion	Molly Braswell
Barbara Kessler	James Frye	Nathan Swanson
Brandon Chiesa	Janasha "Jay" Bradford	Paul Yates
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Carolyn Rainey	Johannah Tyer	Rahul Keshap
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