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Contact: Anne Jewell  
media@kentuckygse.com  
502-592-0520

## **The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs Announces 2023 Business Pitch Competition Winners**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky.** – From engaging voters to helping senior citizens, this year's winning business pitches were as impressive and varied as the Kentucky high school students who created them during the 2023 Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE).

GSE identifies, inspires, and empowers Kentucky's future innovators with its three-week Summer Startup program for high schoolers. This year, a record-setting 198 students completed the program. The intensive, non-traditional learning experience develops entrepreneurial skills with lifelong impact. The goal is to help drive economic growth across the commonwealth by supporting the business dreams of students who have the drive and passion to be entrepreneurs and create jobs in Kentucky.

"Every year, I am amazed at the ideas that the Governor's School for Entrepreneurs participants come up with in just three weeks. For many of these students, this is their first exposure to entrepreneurship and it ignites a lifelong passion for exploring, creating and developing new ideas into viable products and services. It is exciting to watch GSE graduates take what they have learned about starting a business back to their communities to make Kentucky a leader in innovation," said Gov. Andy Beshear.

The program culminates with a thrilling Demo Day event, when each team pitches its business to a large audience and a panel of judges. The teams field questions from the judges, who deliberate and award the top three ideas. The winning team receives \$1,000. Second place is awarded \$750, and the team placing third receives \$500. GSE held two sessions this summer on the campus of Northern Kentucky University.

“To say the least, it has been life changing. I met countless amounts of people from all over this amazing state and the friendships are long lasting,” said Braylon Breeze, from Adair County High School, who was on a winning team. “I’ll always have these memories of the program, and I just hope everyone can be part of GSE at some point in their life.”

### **Session One Winners**

**First Place: Fireside** – Educating and engaging voters with unbiased information about candidates and issues.

#### **Fireside Team:**

Braylon Breeze	Adair County	Adair County High School
Kylie Cramer	Lawrence County	Lawrence County High School
Lilly Hibbs	Union County	Union County High School
Carolina Johnson	Morgan County	Morgan County High School
Ryan Toole	Campbell County	Highlands High School

**Second Place: Willow** – Helping people with disabilities or special needs learn about the accessibility of a business before they visit.

#### **Willow Team:**

Aaron Demissie	Jefferson County	Trinity High School
Anna McDowell	Oldham County	Assumption High School
Lola Norman	Warren County	Greenwood High School
Roman St. Clair	Breckinridge Co.	Breckinridge County High School
Houston St. John	Warren County	Bowling Green High School

**Third Place: Salus** – Improving school safety using artificial intelligence (AI) and facial recognition to flag unrecognized people in school buildings.

#### **Salus Team:**

Kylie Batts	Christian County	Hopkinsville High School
Grant Harper	Barren County	Barren County High School
Sruthika Shivakumar	Jefferson County	duPont Manual High School
Luke Storer	Boone County	Ryle High School
MattiClaire Wheeler	Graves County	Mayfield High School

Session One judges were Rashmi Assudani, Dean, Siena School of Business; Robert Lamothe, President, Commonwealth Seed Capital; and Justin Otto, Economic and Community Development Director, Campbell County Fiscal Court.

## **Session Two Winners**

**First Place: JS Chats** – Helping senior citizens living in care facilities feel less isolated by connecting them via video call with high school students who need service hours.

### **JS Chats Team:**

Haley Carr	Laurel County	Corbin High School
Timothy Nichols	Caldwell County	Caldwell County High School
Landon Scaggs	Greenup County	Russell High School
Noah Stewart	Jefferson County	duPont Manual High School
Ali Yarali	Calloway County	Murray High School

**Second Place: Magnify** – Assisting teens looking for jobs by creating an interactive and engaging app.

### **Magnify Team:**

Ezra Foote	Calloway County	Calloway County High School
Shaivisri Koya	Jefferson County	duPont Manual High School
Kenley Rhodes	Breckinridge County	Breckinridge County High School
Jack Scantland	Oldham County	Francis Parker School of Louisville
Dani Smith	Clay County	Clay County High School

**Third Place: QuickER** – Reducing wait times in emergency rooms by creating an app that shows ER wait times and alternative options.

### **QuickER Team:**

Eli Back	Campbell County	Highlands High School
Alexis Davidson	Boone County	Ryle High School
Deepika Koripelli	Jefferson County	duPont Manual High School
Zach Radivonyk	Lyon County	Lyon County High School
Ryan Runyon	Boyd County	Paul G. Blazer High School

Session Two judges were Dave Knox, Executive Director, Blue North; Malcolm Muhammad, VP of Engagement and Outcomes, Russell Innovation Center for Entrepreneurs; and Angela C. Crawford, President, Crawford Partners.

“This year was already special as GSE celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of transforming lives in Kentucky. Once again, our students came together from across the commonwealth to accept the challenge of creating businesses in three weeks,” said Anne Jewell, president and CEO of GSE. “Congratulations to everyone who participated in this rigorous program. The skills developed and connections made during GSE provide meaningful and lasting benefits for the students and the entire state.”

An additional award sponsored by Access Ventures was given to teams that won the Reconstruct Challenge by creating an idea that produces a positive impact on the world around them. Each team was awarded \$500.

**Session 1 Reconstruct Challenge Winner: Sprout Space** – Providing fresh produce in food deserts with a monthly seed packet subscription service designed for at-home, indoor gardening.

**Sprout Space Team:**

Howra Al Garawi	Jefferson County	Fairdale High School
Keaton Carr	Madison County	Model High School
Kassidy Evans	Boone County	Walton-Verona High School
Hannah Pittman	Oldham County	Oldham County High School
Dakota Ward	Martin County	Martin County High School

**Session 2 Reconstruct Challenge Winner: Artlet** - Helping high school students' mental health through creative workshops.

**Artlet Team:**

Allison Lopez	Boone County	Ryle High School
Kirshika Lungani	Jefferson County	Ballard High School
Gabriella Ostrander	Leslie County	Leslie County High School
Jordan Puitz	Kenton County	Dixie Heights High School
Ruby Robinson	Daviess County	Daviess County High School

To date, more than 900 high school students have graduated from GSE's summer program since it began in 2013. Graduates qualify for millions of dollars in scholarships at colleges and universities across Kentucky. Dozens of businesses have been launched in Kentucky by GSE graduates and several patents have been filed.

All Kentucky 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders can apply for the Summer Startup program. GSE does not consider grade-point-average or test scores in its application, and the program is free for selected students thanks to generous funding from the state, and donations from other public and private supporters. The application for GSE's 2024 Summer Startup program opens later this fall at [www.kentuckygse.com](http://www.kentuckygse.com)

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**The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs**

The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs (GSE) celebrates its 10th Anniversary in 2023. GSE identifies, inspires, and empowers Kentucky's future innovators. GSE's Summer Startup program develops entrepreneurial skills in high school students and qualifies them for college scholarships. GSE's Collegiate Pitch program is Kentucky's largest collegiate pitch competition, offering thousands of dollars in prizes. GSE alums have launched more than 30 businesses and filed for multiple patents. Because of strong partnerships with entities like the Kentucky Education and Labor Cabinet and the Cabinet for Economic Development, along with private and public supporters like The Marksbury Family Foundation and The Duke Energy Foundation, GSE programs are free for selected student entrepreneurs. For more information, visit [kentuckygse.com](http://kentuckygse.com).