

M&T Bank Announces Winners of The New Jersey Multicultural Small Business Accelerator Program Pitch Competition

Finale of seven-week program awarded a total \$30,000 to local entrepreneurs

Winners of M&T Bank's New Jersey Multicultural Small Business Accelerator Program Pitch Competition.

From left to right: Marcos Navas, Howie Jeon, and Dr. Susan Fair.

Jersey City, NJ – November 12, 2024— Three entrepreneurs have been named winners of [M&T Bank's](#) (NYSE:MTB) Jersey City Multicultural Small Business Accelerator Program pitch competition, held in partnership with the [New Jersey Small Business Development Center \(NJSBDC\)](#) at [NJCU School of Business](#). The winning participants were awarded a combined total of \$30,000 during the competition's final pitch event, hosted today at the NJCU School of Business.

Following presentations from seven finalists, a panel of judges representing M&T, NJCU, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and other local business leaders selected the winners:

- **First Place, \$15,000:** Howie Jeon, TaleWeaver, West New York, NJ—An AI-powered interactive storytelling app that empowers children to create and control personalized stories while building essential reading skills.
- **Second Place, \$10,000:** Marcos Navas, [E-Sports Creative League](#), Teaneck, NJ—An e-sports creative studio that empowers gamers to become creators, shifting from passive gameplay to roles in game design, digital storytelling, and content creation.
- **Third Place, \$5,000:** Dr. Susan Fair, [Helping Hurting Hearts Community Outreach](#), Jersey City, NJ—A non-profit organization dedicated to uplifting underserved populations, particularly seniors and women reentering their communities after incarceration.

The seven-week program provided participants with resources and training to refine their business strategies. The curriculum, which took place at the NJCU School of Business, included topics such as business planning, capital access, marketing, branding, and pitch development.

"Our commitment to community growth is deeply connected to supporting small businesses, and we're thrilled to see the impact these entrepreneurs will have in the community," said Tom Comiskey, Area Executive, M&T Bank. "At M&T, we're dedicated to fostering the growth and sustainability of diverse small businesses."

Over 70 entrepreneurs applied to join the program, with 34 selected to participate. After initial pitch presentations on October 29, seven finalists moved forward to the final competition on November 12.

"This program is an opportunity to meet small businesses owners—whether start-ups or established operations—where they are," said Sheila Harris-Adams, Regional Director, NJSBDC, NJCU School of Business. "Sitting alongside them throughout this journey is an amazing way to both educate and empower entrepreneurs to realize their dreams."

"I am truly honored to receive this award; it has been an unforgettable experience," said Howie Jeon, Owner of TaleWeaver and the first-prize winner. "This support will help us take TaleWeaver to the next level and further our mission of inspiring children to engage with reading and continue their education in a fun, personalized way."

The Multicultural Small Business Accelerator Program empowers and fosters growth for diverse small businesses within the New Jersey community. This program provides a strong foundation for these businesses to thrive, driving sustainable opportunities and long-term success.

About M&T

M&T Bank Corporation is a financial holding company headquartered in Buffalo, New York. M&T's principal banking subsidiary, M&T Bank, provides banking products and services with a branch and ATM network spanning the eastern U.S. from Maine to Virginia and Washington, D.C. Trust-related services are provided in select markets in the U.S. and abroad by M&T's Wilmington Trust-affiliated companies and by M&T Bank. For more information about M&T Bank, visit www.mtb.com.

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