

Hamilton businesses dominate this year's FirstOntario 1Awards

Five business owners named winners and share \$200,000 in cash and professional services

Hamilton ON, May 28, 2025 – While celebrating 13 years of supporting local small businesses, the FirstOntario 1Awards pitch competition named five winners who shared \$200,000 in professional services (\$180,000) and cash (\$20,000) prizes. And – they are all from Hamilton.

Apothecary Kitchen prepares homemade, plant-based meal options packed with more taste and less waste. *Electric Diner* offers 80's nostalgia that inspires its menu and the experience. *Main Stage Rehearsal Studios* houses spaces for musicians to work and play while *Willard's Ice Cream* mixes up fun flavours and traditional favourites. *ImaginAble Solutions* is the creative mind behind Guided Hands®, an assistive device that enables anyone with limited fine motors skills to write, paint and draw.

"We're grateful to our partners for continuing to support local businesses throughout the 13 years of the 1Awards program," said Joanne Battaglia, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Communications and Community Partnerships at FirstOntario Credit Union. "Small businesses are the heart and soul of our communities and we're happy to continue to support them. We hope this experience contributes to their ongoing success."

The 1Awards pitch competition is possible because of its dedicated partners. Agro Zaffiro LLP, Giant Shoe Creative Agency, KPMG, Mohawk Centre for Entrepreneurship, Play Advertising, the Hamilton Spectator and Weever provide the program's specialized services and cash prizes. Additional supporters include The Thornton Group, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce and Carmens Group.

FirstOntario's 1Awards competition has generated more than \$2.3 million for small business communities through Hamilton, Halton, Niagara, Brant and surrounding regions with a goal of helping local businesses get to the next level.

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About FirstOntario Credit Union

FirstOntario is a full service cooperative financial institution, serving members for more than 85 years throughout the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario. With \$7 billion in assets under management, FirstOntario is one of Canada's largest credit unions. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award-winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us at FirstOntario.com.