



**SOCIAL
INNOVATION LAB
2020-21
IMPACT REPORT**



JOHNS HOPKINS
UNIVERSITY

Social Innovation Lab

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Growth, innovation and creative solutions can result from the most limiting barriers. The effects of the pandemic have been complex but, the Social Innovation Lab (SIL) witnessed over the last year our Accelerator cohort and alumni push forward, pivot, and pilot to sustain operations and continue to make a measurable impact in Baltimore and beyond.

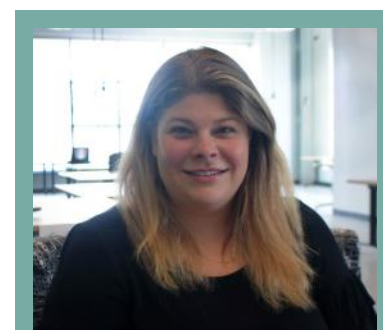
From November 2020 – April 2021, SIL brought together 10 teams that embodied the meaning of resilience and supported one another throughout their journeys. Each team showed up weekly to validate their value propositions; work toward mutually agreed-upon goals; strengthen their storytelling skills; develop pilots and new business lines; and better identify how they could scale impact while applying lean innovation methods.

This year, we:

- Adapted our curricula for the virtual environment, honing essential skills for business building, measuring and communicating impact, and digital storytelling.
- Increased our storytelling across social channels, blog, and website to provide more insight into our startups' journeys and highlight the many people behind the scenes of our programs.
- Onboarded new collaborations with Baltimore-based experts to provide our entrepreneurs with 1:1 coaching, applying human-centered design principles, crafting their pitch, and strengthening their marketing, branding, and communications.
- Continued our partnership with JHU Carey Business School's [Community Consulting Lab](#) to provide student consultant support for all 10 teams.
- Engaged in conversations to strengthen the Baltimore ecosystem, and shared these insights at Baltimore Innovation Week 2021.
- With the support from the Abell Foundation, we were able to award our peer-selected Cohort Prize. Our Accelerator teams voted for Winifred Winston of Dyslexia Advocation to receive the \$25,000 award for her progress during the cohort, potential for impact, and plan for the future.

In the following pages, I'm proud to share more information about SIL's impacts over the last year and this remarkable cohort of teams. I invite you to contact me or our ventures if you have resources, connections, or funding to help them achieve their goals to build lasting social change here in Baltimore and beyond.

Sincerely,
Madison Marks, Director



[MEET OUR DIRECTOR](#)

ABOUT SIL

The Social Innovation Lab (SIL) at Johns Hopkins University accelerates emerging ventures and leaders that seek to change Baltimore and the world. SIL provides funding, advising and mentorship, training, technical assistance, office space, and network access to help innovative mission-driven companies and disruptive technologies develop into thriving, sustainable ventures that make a measurable impact.

SIL's Goals:

1. Support innovators based in or focused on Baltimore, providing individuals and teams with tools to turn their ideas into sustainable social ventures.
2. Catalyze the Baltimore-area innovation ecosystem, ensuring inclusive pathways for social innovators to access appropriate resources and skills to sustain their businesses and scale their impact.
3. Provide meaningful opportunities for communal development, knowledge exchange, and collaboration between the Hopkins community and the social innovation ecosystem in areas where the University resides.

OUR IMPACT

SINCE 2011

103

VENTURES
SUPPORTED

\$76M

FUNDING
SECURED

580

TRAINED IN
BOOTCAMPS

288

FULL-TIME
EMPLOYEES AT
SIL VENTURES

2020-21 COHORT

90%

BIPOC-
LED

70%

WOMEN
LED

60%

COMMUNITY
STARTUPS

60%

FOR-PROFIT
VENTURES

\$250K

FUNDING
SECURED*



*Reported by SIL teams from November 2020-May 2021.

SIL IN THE NEWS

2020-21 COHORT

Johns Hopkins Social Innovation Lab selects 10 projects for accelerator program | Johns Hopkins University's Hub

Dyslexia Advocation wins \$25K prize at Social Innovation Lab showcase | Johns Hopkins University's Hub

Dyslexia Advocation Inc. wins JHU Social Innovation Lab's \$25K prize | Technical.ly

Spy Museum's new robot opens secret world to kids in hospital | Featuring WeGo Foundation | The Washington Post

Black-Founded Crowdfunding Platform SpreadKarma Wants to Make 2021 the Year of Giving | AfroTech

Student Startup Empowers Artisans Halfway Around the World | Featuring Taara Projects | Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures

Interview with Chef Steven Allbright, co-founder of Elevated Soups | 2021 PBS Short Film Festival

CovidSMS seeks to address the digital divide | Johns Hopkins University's newsletter

A New Business Model Emerges: Meet the Digital News Co-op | Featuring Bloc by Block News | Global Investigative Journalism Network



SIL ALUMNI

SIL's story was featured in the fall edition of the Johns Hopkins Magazine.

“ **If entrepreneurs, at their best, solve problems and provide new and valuable goods and services, social entrepreneurs apply that same approach to fixing entrenched societal concerns.** ”

JOHNS HOPKINS MAGAZINE



**FOR THE
GREATER GOOD**

For nearly a decade, the Johns Hopkins Social Innovation Lab has nurtured a generation of mission-driven companies

SIL IN THE NEWS

SIL ALUMNI

Brittany Young, the founder of [B-360 Baltimore](#), released her inspiring TED Talk: [How dirt bikes and STEM ignite ingenuity in Baltimore](#). Brittany was named an inaugural fellow with the Fund for New Leadership. B-360 also received a [\\$300K grant from Microsoft](#) and was named among nine projects to receive funds through the [Johns Hopkins University's Innovation Fund for Community Safety grant awards](#). | SIL Alum 2016-17



The [ClearMask](#), the first transparent surgical face masks approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, has [sold millions of see-through masks](#) to hospitals, governments, corporates, and consumers since March 2020. Founded by Hopkins alumni Allysa Ditmar, Aaron Hsu, Inez Lam, and Elyse Heob, ClearMask continues to scale its impact. The group was recently named among [Forbes 30 under 30](#). | SIL Alum and Cohort Prize Winner 2017-18

Bree Jones, the founder of [Parity Homes](#), an equitable development company, drafted and helped pass a [Maryland State bill](#) that will help [repair economic harms caused by redlining across the state](#). Parity currently has a collective of 25 people committed to homeownership and will plan to move into their new homes in Harlem Park in early 2022. Bree has received [national press and recognition](#) in 2021. | SIL Alum and Cohort Prize Winner 2019-20



SIL IN THE NEWS

SIL ALUMNI



Rose Health, which uses predictive technology to detect behavioral health issues, has raised **\$1.73 million in an oversubscribed seed funding round**. Founder Kavi Misri was recently recognized as a **40 under 40 honoree** by the Washington Business Journal. | SIL Alum 2018-19



CLLCTIVLY, a social change organization centering on Black genius, narrative power, social networks, and resource mobilization, has played a critical role in funding Black-led organizations in Baltimore. Founder Jamye Wooten hopes to see this momentum continue, thanks in part to receiving **\$200,000 from funders like the Rockefeller Foundation** to support its microgrant initiatives, and mobilizing more than \$100,000 in grants to 50 organizations through **CLLCTIVGIVE 2021**. | SIL Alum 2019-20



Healthify, software that helps healthcare improve the health outcomes of millions of Americans, was **acquired in July 2021** by Wellsky, a health care technology provider for an undisclosed amount. | SIL Alum 2012-13



MindStand Technologies, an artificial intelligence startup specializing in detecting online harassment, hate speech, and potential safety risks, has been on a roll with pitch competitions. **It won \$10,000 at the Minority Innovation Weekend summer pitch competition** and \$15,000 in a pitch competition organized by Duke University and North Carolina Central University. **CEO Michael Ogunsanya shared his pitch tips with Technical.ly**. | SIL Alum 2019-20



SIL Alum made a splash on this year's **list of Baltimore's RealLIST Startups 2021**. Four SIL alumni - Parity, Infinite Focus Schools, MindStand Technologies, and Rose Health - were named among the top 10, and SpreadKarma received an Honorable Mention. | SIL Alum 2018-2021



Intelhealth, telemedicine and case management platform connecting patients and frontline health providers with remote doctors to deliver high-quality health services to last-mile populations, was listed by the World Economic Forum among **15 innovations that are helping fight COVID-19**. | SIL Alum 2016-17

ACCELERATOR COHORT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Social Innovation Lab's core program continues the culture our original student founders began in 2011: a mutually supportive environment where people come together to address the world's greatest challenges. Our cohort-based learning model offers a six-month program where innovators and entrepreneurs can support each other on their pathway to scale. Each autumn, SIL conducts a competitive application process for Baltimore-area residents and JHU students, faculty, and staff to receive support for their social enterprise. SIL is looking for talented teams and individuals with innovative ideas that have the potential to sustainably deliver social impact, and we ask each applicant not only what they would learn from this community but also what they can contribute.

SIL'S CURRICULUM FEATURES THREE HALLMARK ELEMENTS

1. Conduct a rigorous customer discovery process to learn from your target market and refine your unique value proposition.
2. Define and meet critical milestones to advance your venture.
3. Connect and collaborate with other entrepreneurs in a mutually-supportive, cohort-based learning model.

VENTURES IN THE COHORT ARE PROVIDED

- \$1,000 in non-dilutive seed funding, plus up to \$2,880 in additional support to conduct customer discovery and prototyping objectives via the [I-Corps Site Grant](#).
- The potential to receive additional funding up to \$25,000 via our peer-selected Cohort Prize
- Mentorship and access to an extensive network of advisors
- One-on-one coaching and intensive support from the SIL director
- Learning sessions and bootcamps where participants learn from experienced entrepreneurs and social sector leaders
- Other critical forms of technical support and assistance as needed, including pro bono legal, tax and accounting, and banking support.
- Opportunities to pitch potential funders and supporters at SIL events, including the annual SIL Showcase event.
- Access to co-working and meeting space, including FastForward U's 10,000-square-foot innovation hub.*

*The 2020-21 Cohort Program was conducted virtually, and SIL could not offer access to on-campus resources. We look forward to returning to campus for the 2021-22 cohort.

2020-21 COHORT PROGRAMMING

For the 2020-21 cohort, SIL received 63 applications, of which 60 percent were not affiliated with Johns Hopkins University. After conducting interviews with over 30 finalists, **10 teams were selected**. From November 2020 to April 2021, SIL offered 60 hours of programming and 280 hours of mentorship/coaching through a combination of weekend bootcamps, Wednesday night meetings, and 1:1 meetings. At the end of the program, SIL received a 90% Net Promoter Score.

BOOTCAMP TOPICS

- Customer discovery
- Introduction to human-centered design
- Measuring impact
- Setting milestones

WEEKLY COHORT TOPICS

- Capturing social value
- DEI and neurodiversity
- Finance and accounting
- Fundraising
- Hiring tech talent
- Legal essentials
- Leadership and team development
- Marketing, branding and communications
- Media and public relations
- Mental health and wellness
- Strategic partnerships
- Operations and strategy
- Pitching and storytelling

Essential to our program are SIL's alumni, advisors, supporters, collaborators, and consultants who dedicated their time conducting workshops, speaking on panels, sharing their stories, or meeting with entrepreneurs. We extend a special thank you to the following:

Stephen Babcock, Technical.ly

Delshan Baker, Endeavor TBD

Tracey Barbour-Gillett, Abell Foundation

Francesca Bonifacio, Social Innovation Lab

John Brothers, T. Rowe Price Foundation

Jeff Cherry, Conscious Venture Lab

McKeever (Mac) Conwell II, RareBreed Ventures

Yair Flicker, SmartLogic

Darius Graham, The Harry and Jeanette

Weinberg Foundation

Will Holmes, Will Holmes Consulting

Kerry Ingram, FastForward U

Danny Jacobs, Johns Hopkins Medicine

Bree Jones, Parity*

Robert Kennedy III, Kennetik Communications

Jim Kucher, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Elise Liberto, Brown Advisory

Aaron Moore, Orange Element

Chuck Morton, Venable LLP

Paddy Morton, Maryland Nonprofits

A. Jay Nwachu, Innovation Works Baltimore and Ignite Capital

Eesha Patne, Social Innovation Lab

Shantell Roberts, Touching Young Lives, Inc.*

Ana Rodney, MOMCares*

Bill Smedick, Johns Hopkins Center for Leadership Education

Colin Tarbert, Baltimore Development Corporation

Ricky Venters, FastForward

Anthony Watters, More Watters Co.*

Winifred A. Winston, Dyslexia Advocation, Inc.*

*SIL Alum

COLLABORATIONS

ORANGE ELEMENT

Baltimore-based marketing, branding, and design company Orange Element **brought its expertise** to SIL teams by delivering a two-hour interactive workshop. They guided the teams in defining the core elements of their brand and lead them in brainstorming how to activate their messages. After the workshop, Orange Element met with each team and advised them on how to enhance their digital strategies and online presence in order to support their future goals.

“ Meeting with Orange Element was extremely helpful in gaining individualized advice on optimizing our SEO, garnering meaningful interactions through media outputs, and developing new partnerships. We received clear, tangible action items to work on in order to continue the growth of our venture. ”

-ERIC FEI, WEGO FOUNDATION

“ We needed to sharpen our branding and fundraising plans but we didn’t know where to begin. Orange Element explained small things that we could do to make a large impact. They helped our team gain a deeper understanding of the work to be done and empowered us to do that work confidently and creatively. ”

-DANI BATTLE, RESTORING INNER CITY HOPE (RICH) PROGRAM

COMMUNITY CONSULTING LAB

The **Community Consulting Lab (CCL)**, a program of Carey Business School’s Office of Experiential Education, lets students serve as consultants to community-based sponsor organizations, including Social Innovation Lab teams. The SIL cohort teams received a total of 320 hours of consulting through the partnership. Over the course of eight weeks, CCL consultants dove deep into predefined problems or challenge statements issued by the teams.

“ We addressed for Elevated Soups the challenges to setting up a web-based point of sale system by documenting and refining business processes, including an inventory system, identifying system requirements, and reviewing vendor functionality. They are now better positioned to manage production and sales while funding their meal and outreach programs. ”

-KELLI TUBMAN WHITE, CCL CONSULTANT

“ Our CCL consultant helped move our business and marketing strategy immensely forward. The attention to detail, wide array of knowledge, and willingness to help made each meeting extremely productive. The genuine excitement and vision our consultant shared for our project’s future made them stand out, as it inspired our team to re-imagine what our project is and can become. ”

-SHANTHI RAMAKRISHNA, TAARA PROJECTS

EVENTS

IMPACT BOOTCAMP

SIL develops impact bootcamps for both the Johns Hopkins University and Baltimore communities to learn or enhance essential skills for launching and leading a social venture. In previous years, these events were held as all-day, in-person trainings. This year, SIL hosted an online Social Enterprise Bootcamp in partnership with the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). For the remainder of the cohort program, SIL ran shorter, skills-specific workshops that were adapted for the 2020-21 cohort teams' needs.

SHOWCASE

In 2021, we reimagined our culminating event for the Accelerator program to broaden our reach and share the good news about these remarkable teams to a larger audience. Now named the Social Innovation Lab Innovators' Showcase, our goal was to provide a platform for our teams to share their inspirational stories of impact while creating a space to encourage the audience to engage with the entrepreneurs.

Leading up to the Showcase, SIL brought on a business storyteller and videographer in order to bring the entrepreneurs' visions to life. From scripting to filming to editing, the entrepreneurs came away with a digital product that could be used for future pitches or promotional materials.



[WATCH THE SIL SHOWCASE RECAP](#)



2020-21 COHORT PRIZE WINNER

Our 2020-21 Cohort Prize winner is Winifred A. Winston of [Dyslexia Advocation, Inc.](#), a nonprofit that educates, empowers, and equips adults and parents of children with language-based learning disabilities.

COHORT PRIZE

This year's \$25,000 Cohort Prize was supported by the [Abell Foundation](#), which shares SIL's interest in nurturing entrepreneurial talent and growing our local ecosystem of successful ventures. The winner was voted on by the cohort members based on the strength of their progress over the six-month cohort period, their plan for future growth, and their potential for impact.

[FULL DETAILS FOUND IN JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY'S HUB ARTICLE](#)

BLOC BY BLOCK NEWS

A media cooperative owned by newsreaders and news producers. We're helping Marylanders make informed decisions in communities through our newsletter, social channels, and a mobile app (coming soon).

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We launched a minimum, viable product during the SIL program. As a media company, we figured the best way to validate that our product can excite readers was, to begin with a newsletter. Our SIL mentor was integral to helping us see where to begin. Now we're growing our audience. We've multiplied our number of newsletter subscribers and are consistently seeing open rates above 40% when the national average open rate for newsletters is 15%.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Consistently publishing valuable news content and transforming readers into subscriber members.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

What we're building is something greater than technology — it is a media cooperative and civic organization that connects residents to media rooted in their backyard. Our events bridge neighbor-to-neighbor connections across economic, racial and geographic divides. In three to five years, following our successful Bloc by Block News: Maryland pilot, we'll start expansion, incubate media co-ops, and eventually reach all 50 states. Each state would have its respective media co-op and a one-stop shop mobile app for local information.

TEAM

- Kevon Paynter, Executive Director and Co-Founder
- Christina Sturdivant Sani, Editorial Director and Co-Founder

PITCH



CONTACT/MEDIA

[WEBSITE](#)

[FACEBOOK](#)

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[SIL ONE PAGER](#)

COVIDSMS

A customizable mass-SMS system that provides COVID-19-related information and resources to individuals without reliable access to the internet.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

That we were able to make an animated video that shares what CovidSMS does.



CHALLENGES AHEAD

Continuing to balance the project as volunteers transition out of college and into full-time working positions.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

Success is low-income individuals receiving relevant information and resources through text messages. Even if members of this population do not have a smartphone or lack Internet access, they would still be able to access food resources, mental health assistance, Covid statistics, testing sites and vaccination information. This is not to say that we want to replace personal relationships and communication, but with the world's transition to a digital space, we believe there should be greater equity in access to information and news.

TEAM

- Hannah Chiu, Co-Founder
- Serena Wang, Co-Founder
- Andrew Zheng, Co-Founder and Tech Lead
- Christina Wong, Advisor

PITCH



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DYSLEXIA ADVOCATION

We educate, empower, and equip adults and parents of children with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities so they will be empowered with accurate knowledge and an understanding of the special education process to include appropriate interventions and instructional strategies to successfully advocate for themselves and their children.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We were able to launch our Workplace Solutions Framework, which aims to educate companies about neurodiversity in the workplace.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Hiring paid staff.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

Success today for Dyslexia Advocation, Inc., would mean:

- Raising enough funds to fully execute our Parent Solutions Program, which speaks directly to our mission to help parents of children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities access the necessary tools to help their children become successful readers.
- Launching “The Black and Dyslexic Podcast.”
- Getting in front of businesses to use our 50 licenses provided by one of our partners to kick off our Workplace Solutions Program to offer businesses the online course, Neurodiversity 101.

Having an impact would mean increasing the number of children identified with dyslexia (currently 80% of school-aged children are not identified), providing appropriate interventions and remediation, and reducing the mental illness triggers and behavioral disorders resulting from undiagnosed dyslexia. In addition, we would help bring neurodiversity to the forefront of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace, directly helping neurodivergent adults.

TEAM

- Winifred A. Winston, Executive Director and Founder

PITCH



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ELEVATED SOUPS

Creates divine soups and stews for the public while reinvesting funds into outreach programs for the homeless in Central Maryland. This social enterprise component of the Franciscan Center of Baltimore will diversify additional revenue streams, create workforce development opportunities and continue to provide nutritious soups to the current homeless population.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Developing the plans for our company and completing 50 customer discoveries.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Fundraising and capacity to start our company while still running our nonprofit.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

In many ways, we have already achieved small victories. Just over 18 months ago, we changed the way we create and serve meals. Everything is cooked from scratch by our cooks. We have changed attitudes and expectations as well as the quality of the meals we served. Our meals are now healthier and fresher. We are now helping our clients who may have diabetes, high cholesterol, or are overweight live a better life.

We want the Franciscan Center to be seen as serving and delivering restaurant-style food and soup.

TEAM

- Jeffrey Griffin, Executive Director, Franciscan Center of Baltimore and Co-Founder
- Chef Steven Allbright, Culinary Director, Franciscan Center of Baltimore and Co-Founder

PITCH



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FAIR HOUSING

Federate Association to Innovate Rental Housing (FAIR Housing) aims to eliminate evictions in Baltimore City and restore humanity to an industry responsible for providing one of the most critically essential and fundamental human needs — housing — by utilizing innovative thinking and leveraging technology.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Housing is a complex and multi-faceted industry. Our time with SIL helped us simplify our message to be able to relate to all audiences in a concise and understandable way. This will help us with multiple business initiatives, and the collateral we created will be used in many ways to engage with partners and those needing our services.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Getting the right parties to the table to have a conversation around policy changes. Each district has its own set of rules and regulations and we need to identify key players who can see value in our mission and remain neutral to create positive change and eliminate unnecessary evictions.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

All parties involved work together to reach a mutually desired outcome, such as zero evictions. This includes housing providers and the associations they represent, renters and the associations that represent them, and governmental agencies that are touched by evictions in some way, shape, or form. As for how the world will be different when FAIR Housing is successful, that is simple: Home is the center of life. Stability in the home leads to strength in the community and makes our world a better place.

TEAM

- Brian Wojcik, President, COO, and Co-Founder
- Carmen Fields, CEO, Engagement Director and Co-Founder
- Michael Salonish, CTO

PITCH



CONTACT/MEDIA

[WEBSITE](#)

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MENTI

An online mental health platform for women of color and nonbinary individuals, whose mental health needs are often unacknowledged and left out from traditional platforms and pipelines to care. We empower users with access to culturally competent therapists for one-on-one and group therapy sessions, educational modules, and a community to help them take control of their mental health and thrive.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Our biggest takeaway from SIL was the value of customer discovery, identifying different business models, and getting more clarity on price points.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Growing a community on social media, building and testing our app MVP, and building partnerships with group therapy organizations and practicing therapists.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

Our short-term goals are to create a pipeline to mental health care for women of color, increase access to specialized educational mental health content for our communities, and reduce search time and stress in finding a care provider. In the medium term, we hope to increase our users' overall feelings of well-being and support. And, in the long term, we hope to break down stigmas surrounding mental health for our community. We will consider Menti a success if young women of color and nonbinary folks can get the care they need early on, so they can feel supported and thrive throughout their lives.

TEAM

- Edo Ighodaro, COO and Co-Founder
- Meghna Kumar, CEO and Co-Founder
- Nicole Muhleisen, CFO/Marketing

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RICH-RESTORING INNER CITY HOPE

A nonprofit organization founded in 2011 with the mission to love, inspire and empower youth and families throughout the city of Baltimore. Through the RICH Young Leaders Program, the organization is working with youth in the Cherry Hill neighborhood to develop their leadership qualities by exposing them to experiential learning and skills-building training. RICH will be launching a workforce development program later this year and expand its current programming for young women.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Becoming more organized with our 'back office' work.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Growing our workforce development program.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

Success would be the residents in the community we serve having a broader understanding of what the world has to offer. Be it in employment, activities, or hobbies, among other areas, we want to actively open the world to our clients and equip them to be a part of these new experiences.

This means kids in our after-school programming being inspired to learn more about photography, start a small business, or even join a rowing team. It also means that the adults we prepare for the workplace secure a job and flourish while applying the soft skills and self-confidence developed through their participation in our program.

TEAM

- Michael Battle, Executive Director and Co-Founder
- Danielle Battle, Deputy Director and Co-Founder

PITCH



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SPREADKARMA

A social donation-based crowdfunding platform that provides exposure, support, and access to funding for changemakers creating positive social impact in underserved and underrepresented communities.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

We conducted our customer discovery journey interviews, developed our internal operations, received mentorship, won the AWE and University of Baltimore pitch competitions and were featured in [AfroTech](#), [Technical.ly](#) and the [Baltimore Business Journal](#).

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Staffing skillset, capacity, and funding.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

SpreadKarma will change the world by changing culture. We will create a social community around group giving and collective impact. We intend to draw in the brightest, coolest, most unique, and cutting-edge fundraisers worldwide: people and organizations who connect to the culture of the communities we are serving.

Our big picture and vision are to be the leading crowdfunding site for those communities and projects that are too often neglected, especially communities of color, LGBTQ populations, and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. We plan to build a sustainable, long-term network within and among these communities in a way that they support themselves and each other in meaningful ways — financially, socially, and politically.

TEAM

- Kellie Brown, CEO & Co-Founder
- Sherman Barkdale, COO & Co-Founder
- LeMar Moore, Chief Legal Officer
- Love Joyner, HR / Business Partner

PITCH



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TAARA PROJECTS

A fashion-based social enterprise committed to perpetuating a transparent cycle of positive social and environmental impact through embracing sustainable and ethical practices along our supply chain, from creation to distribution.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Prototyping, finalizing, ordering, receiving, and **SELLING** our first product and executing a successful product launch!

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Diversifying and expanding our audience and customer base so that it extends beyond our friends and family/word-of-mouth network. This will be crucial for sustained and increased engagement for a second launch and for our future.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

The empowerment of even one artisan in a meaningful and lasting way. If we can help one artisan lift themselves out of poverty by giving them the economic opportunity and allowing them to be employed within their chosen profession, then we will have made the world a little better. The greater sense of agency and security that the artisans have as a result of stable and fair employment disrupts the odds of them falling (back) into poverty and economic insecurity.

TEAM

- Shanthi Ramakrishna, Founder and CEO
- Fatima Elzamzami, Marketing and Social Media
- Saisri Gussenhoven, Grant Writing and Finance
- Keerti Soundappan, Communications and Outreach
- Michelle Tu, Director of PR and Marketing
- Castalia Vidaurri, Website Development

PITCH



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WEGO FOUNDATION

We engage pediatric patients at 11 hospitals across the country with telepresence robots to provide virtual tours of attractions, allowing children and their families to seek both educational enrichment and safe “escape” from the hospital. [Watch a video example](#) of kid patients “visiting” and connecting with people and animals at the National Aquarium in Baltimore.

PROUD ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Expanding to a new market (assisted-living facilities) and establish our first paying partnership!

CHALLENGES AHEAD

Capitalizing on our recent momentum, we are looking to incorporate into two entities (one non-profit and one for-profit) and scale up our venue network so that we can meet our rising demand from customers.

SUCCESS AND IMPACT

When children from hospitals across the country (and across the world!) can access live tours of venues and attractions that could be just across the street or thousands of miles away, based on patients’ interests. Even though their medical care may have intimidating aspects, for the few moments these patients are on our tours, we want them to forget about their physical surroundings and feel like they are a kid at the attraction again. We have designed our program to be as immersive as possible. When we ask the patients if they feel like they have been able to “escape the hospital” following our tours, we have received a resounding yes. In summary, we want to provide kids the opportunity to go wherever they want to go, across the world, with our partner venues.

TEAM

- Galen Shi, Founder and Managing Director
- Paven Shah, Executive Director
- Hayden Dux, Director of Development
- Eric Fei, Marketing and Logistics Coordinator

PITCH



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WHY DID YOU APPLY TO SIL?



"Because I am a start-up nonprofit with a working board of professional entrepreneurs and educators who were directly impacted by COVID-19. I needed additional support to provide accountability, to bounce ideas off, and adult human interaction from like-minded, vetted community leaders forging ahead to do good work in such trying times. I could not be the only person thinking of how to launch, grow and scale my business during a pandemic."
-Winifred A. Winston, Dyslexia Advocation, Inc.



"It's clear if you look through SIL's past cohorts that it is a program where teams get set up for success. Since joining the cohort, we've had access to the resources we need from legal support to advice on our pitch decks and business plans. All of the work we have put in here with this amazing team will be what sets us up for success. Beyond that, SIL has been a great place to connect with other passionate entrepreneurs in Baltimore that are building toward issues that are worth solving."
-Galen Shi, WeGo Foundation



"The SIL accelerator helped our company tremendously, not just from valuable information but also from the connections. The phrase, 'It's not what you know, it's who you know,' is truly relevant and needs to be shared with would-be entrepreneurs. We would advise up-and-coming social entrepreneurs to get out there and network, ask questions and become an expert in your field."
-Kellie Brown, SpreadKarma



"Because of what SIL stands for: supporting mission-driven and disruptive ventures so that they can understand and actualize their full potential. SIL made clear that although they were committed to helping us achieve success and growth, they were also committed to having the teams put in the work necessary to make such growth possible. Thus, SIL's program offered our team an environment and a structure that would motivate us to make tangible progress and do so with purpose, direction, and vision."
-Shanthi Ramakrishna, Taara Projects

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SPONSORS

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MENTORS AND COHORT SESSION SPEAKERS

Stephen Babcock, Delshan Baker, Tracey Barbour-Gillett, Francesca Bonifacio, John Brothers, Jeff Cherry, McKeever (Mac) Conwell II, Yair Flicker, Darius Graham, Will Holmes, Kerry Ingram, Danny Jacobs, Bree Jones, Robert Kennedy III, Jim Kucher, Elise Liberto, Aaron Moore, Chuck Morton, Paddy Morton, A. Jay Nwachu, Eesha Patne, Shantell Roberts, Ana Rodney, Bill Smedick, Colin Tarbert, Ricky Venters, Anthony Watters, Winifred A. Winston

ADVISORS

Delshan Baker, John Brothers, Jennifer Clark, Cinnamon Dornsife, Bill Smedick, Bree Jones, Jim Kucher, Elise Liberto, Jamie McDonald, Kunal Parikh, Kylie Patterson, Shantell Roberts, Colin Tarbert, Brittany Young

FELLOWS IN RESIDENCE

Design Strategists in Residence: Francesca Bonifacio, Eesha Patne

Video Storyteller in Residence: Antonio Hernandez

COMMUNITY CONSULTING LAB

Carey Business School Staff: Tracy Akinade, Mike Doyle

Student Consultants: Aaiza Aktar, Abhay Anand, Chisom Azodoh, Angelo Bell, Yixin Chen, Kelly Oke Dowd, Anisha Kumar, Kim Le, Tianyi Liu, Zhou (Winnie) Lu, Spriha Modi, Natalia Nazarchuk, Sarah Saltzman, Fangkun Qi, Zach Praw, Kelli Tubman White, Jiatong Zhou

JOHNS HOPKINS TECHNOLOGY VENTURES

Josh Ambrose, Margie Arguello, Mark Bailey, Liz Burger, Kerrie Carden, Mary Howard, Kerry Ingram, Danny Jacobs, Cindy Madden, Brian Stansky, Maddy Stokes, Mark Vanderzyl, Ricky Venters, Dana Weisgerber, Christy Wyskiel



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