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## **Finalists in \$50,000 PA Wilds BIG IDEA Contest Announced!**

**STATE COLLEGE, PA** – In partnership with the PA WILDS Center for Entrepreneurship, and with funding support provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Ben Franklin Technology Partners' recent BIG IDEA competition targeted the counties of Cameron, Elk, Forest, McKean, and Warren.

Dozens of emerging entrepreneurs who are developing innovations related to the maker economy, forest products, outdoors and recreation and even tech manufacturing, applied to the contest for a chance to win \$50,000 to help launch their “big idea”!

Over 70 people downloaded applications and the preliminary review team had the difficult task of narrowing down the pool of contestants to eight finalists.

**Listed below are the finalists in the 2023 PA Wilds BIG IDEA Contest:**

**Allegheny Mountain Beard Products (William Jones and Loretta Jones), located in Warren County**, created all-natural personal care products that are free from harmful chemicals, synthetic ingredients, and toxins. They offer a range of products that include beard grooming, shampoos, skin creams, deodorant, and baby products. These products prioritize natural ingredients and sustainable packaging.

**Arianne Lorfido, located in Elk County**, developed a window blind specifically for inpatient psychiatric and other patient care environments with high-risk patients. Standard window treatments in a psychiatric setting require curtain tracks and curtains, which presents safety concerns for patients. This window blind allows healthcare facilities to retrofit any window, easily remove them as needed to accommodate high-risk patients, and can be easily wiped down in between patients.

**Caregiver's Artbox (Julie Mader), located in McKean County**, is a subscription-based service that supports individuals working in a home-care setting, or other health professionals within care communities to help spread joy, a sense of purpose, and a feeling of well-being to seniors. The Caregiver's Artbox delivers engaging art lessons for physical and cognitive abilities, using quality supplies and helpful video instructions designed by experienced artists in health.



**CiviLink (Ben Kafferlin and Lisa Hagberg), located in Warren County,** offers a unique, first-of-its-kind software package that streamlines procedures, maintains legal compliance, and enhances operational efficiency for government entities and public-sector employees on an intuitive, customizable platform.

**Hoffman Appalachian (Joshua Brock), located in Elk County,** is a small hops farm producing both fresh and processed hops and grains for breweries and micro-breweries in the PA Wilds region.

**TAT Technologies (Harb Nayar and Kyle Pond), located in Elk County,** created a tabletop “oven” that uses heat, humidity, and high velocity, turbulent airflow to disinfect, decontaminate, or sterilize masks, plastic tools like syringes, and stainless-steel tools used in normal medical, dental, and operational practices.

**White Cane Coffee, (Robert Willman) located in Warren County** is bringing sustainability and more economical manufacturing to a multi-use pod-based hot drink brewing system. Created as a PA Wilds regional product – White Cane Coffee’s reusable bag just needs hot water for a quick on-the-go cup; perfect for busy people and those who are conscientiously reducing their ecological footprint!

**Wright Monumental Works (Kelly Platko), Located in McKean County, developed their Model J Automatic Sandblaster,** a complete front for a sandblasting booth that allows for the constant motion of automatic sandblasting versus manual sandblasting by an operator. This creates a more consistent sandblast, which provides better performance on the final product.

**Please join us on Thursday, June 8th at the University of Pittsburg at Bradford, Bromley Family Theatre to cheer on and support these finalists as well as congratulate the winner!**

**Date:** June 8, 2023

**Time:** 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM Intros, Pitches, for the \$50,000 and Judging  
5:00 PM – Winners for the \$50,000 and the Northwest Bank \$2,500 People’s Choice Awards announced followed by Networking Reception

**Location:** [University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, Bromley Family Theatre](#)

This event will be live, in-person with a fun networking event, but you may choose to attend virtually via ZOOM webinar. All attendees will have the opportunity to vote for the Northwest Bank People’s Choice Award

**RSVP:** [bfcnp.org/bigideafinale](https://bfcnp.org/bigideafinale)



The prize package for the 2023 BIG IDEA Contest includes up to \$50,000 in cash, the opportunity to win an additional \$2,500 in the Northwest Bank People's Choice Award, the chance to pitch the business concept for a \$10,000 seed grant from Ben Franklin, and a guaranteed seat in an upcoming business accelerator program.

**About the PA WILDS** – The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds. [pawilds.com](http://pawilds.com)

**About Ben Franklin Technology Partners:** The largest seed investor in our region, Ben Franklin Technology Partners (an initiative of the PA Department of Community & Economic Development and funded by the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority) has been providing investment capital, business support services, and operational assistance to emerging tech-startups and small manufacturers for nearly 40 years. Learn more at [cnp.benfranklin.org](http://cnp.benfranklin.org)

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