



Press Release

TWENTY-FIVE FOOD INDUSTRY ENTREPRENEURS ADMITTED TO SANTANDER'S PHILANTHROPIC SMALL BUSINESS PILOT PROGRAM

Cultivate Small Business Initiative Helps Fuel Entrepreneurial Success in Greater Boston's Underserved Neighborhoods

BOSTON – November 29, 2017 – Twenty-five food industry entrepreneurs from Greater Boston's underserved neighborhoods have been selected to participate in Santander Bank's signature philanthropic small business initiative – *Cultivate Small Business*. [Announced in May](#), Santander and its program partners, CommonWealth Kitchen, Babson College and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC), developed *Cultivate Small Business* to empower women, minority and immigrant-owned businesses. The program is designed to connect early-stage entrepreneurs with some of the key ingredients needed to succeed in the food business, including industry-specific business management skills, technical assistance, small capital grants, and access to a local network of established food-industry experts.

Participants met specific criteria to apply for *Cultivate Small Business* and the 25 member inaugural group kicked off the program last month with a welcome reception and the first of eight business education courses at Babson College's downtown Boston campus. Sixty-four percent (64%) of the inaugural class's participants represent female-owned businesses, 72 percent (72%) of the business owners live or work in low- and moderate-income communities and 40 percent (40%) of participants are people of color.

"Small business entrepreneurs help create jobs and strengthen their local economies," said Gwen Robinson, Santander's Director of Corporate Social Responsibility. "To do that, they need the right backing and support. Women, minority and immigrant-owned businesses not only lack access to traditional sources of capital, but they often lack access to the important networks that are critical in the early stages of growing a business. *Cultivate Small Business* addresses these support gaps by bringing together customized resources to offer these diverse and passionate entrepreneurs invaluable skills and guidance to help them achieve sustainability."

Entrepreneur and *Cultivate Small Business* participant Linh Tran commented, "I find the program is helping me stay focused on the big picture, as I often get too caught up in the day-to-day operations of my business. One of my big goals for 2018 is fundraising and, so far, the program has really helped me think critically and in the language of a business plan. Another great perk of being part of this group is that I'm able to get to know so many other entrepreneurs and I've gained some really good insights from them."

The 25 entrepreneurs admitted to *Cultivate Small Business's* inaugural class are:

- Jennifer Turner - Miam Miam Macaronerie LLC/South Boston
- Renee Scharoff - Blonde on the Run/Dorchester
- Melissa Stefanini – Buenas/Dorchester
- Sherie Grillon - Nola Fresh/Dorchester
- Teresa Maynard - Sweet Teez Bakery/Dorchester
- Blonde Beauchamp – thisHAITI/Dorchester

- Heather Yunger - Top Shelf Cookies/Dorchester
- Linh Tran - XOI, Inc./Dorchester
- Audrey Yap - Noodle Lab/Dorchester
- Margaret Crowley - Third Cliff Bakery/Dorchester
- Narosmi Auguste - La Belle Creole Cuisine/Mattapan
- Caroline Huffstetler - Nutty Life/Stoneham
- Ellie Tiglao - Olio Culinary/Somerville
- Nikki Economides -Sweet Nicole LLC, DBA Fixx Chocolates /Winthrop
- Amanda Escamilla - Tex Mex Eats/Cambridge
- Lucero Leon-Chi - Whipped - Urban Cupcake Co./Boston
- Luther Pinckney - One One Nine /Roxbury
- John Hopkins - 5 Ways Food/Dorchester
- Alex Khitrik - Inna's Kitchen/Dorchester
- Mark Finnegan - Prospect Ciderworks/Roxbury
- Alexandre Duarte de Britto Pereira - Zing Bowl Brazilian Healthy Food, LLC/Brookline
- Vishal Thapar - Boston Chai Party/Medford
- Morad Bouzidi - MDAB LLC DBA MO'ROCKIN FUSION/Abington
- Ryan Nahas - No Joke Smoke BBQ, LLC/Swansea
- Jon Huang - The Savory Cater LLC/Randolph

Cultivate Small Business is a nine-month initiative implemented in collaboration with Santander's three strategic partners, each of which is providing one of the four key components of the program:

- **Networking** – Calling on its impressive network of inner-city business owners, research resources and policy expertise, **ICIC** coordinates the program's design, manages the application process and will evaluate the pilot to inform the next round of *Cultivate Small Business*.
- **Education** – Designed specifically for food-industry entrepreneurs, **Babson College** is delivering an interactive business education curriculum that provides participants with in-person classes at its downtown Boston campus supplemented by additional online courses.
- **Mentoring** – To provide a community setting where participants can learn from established food industry businesses, **CommonWealth Kitchen** offers shared commercial kitchen space, customized technical assistance as well as industry-specific advice and support.
- **Capital Grants** – **Santander Bank** provides small capital grants to each entrepreneur to help improve business performance. The grants are funded by Santander and administered by CommonWealth Kitchen. Program participants also have access to Bank volunteers who are available to offer financial management advice.

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