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## InnovatHER Promotes Women-owned Businesses

By Stewart Lytle, Reporter

REGIONAL — Emily Levy contracted severe chronic Lyme disease eight years ago as a sophomore at Babson College. To battle the disease with intensive medications, she had to wear a peripherally inserted central catheter or PICC line in her left arm.

The PICC line opening was exposed on the outside of her skin.

As much as she hated the symptoms of her disease, she loathed having to wear her PICC line as she attended college classes, social events and even a Bar Mitzvah. To hide it she wore a sock on her arm, which left her depressed, self-conscious and exhausted worrying about the PICC line's appearance and the risk of it being pulled on.

"What cute guy is going to ask a girl out with a PICC line in her arm," she told an audience this month of other women entrepreneurs during the U.S. Small Business Administration's InnovatHER 2016 challenge. The Babson senior tried wearing PICC line protectors available on the market, but found they did not work as advertised or were unflattering.

After six months, she had the PICC line withdrawn, but the experience created a fire in her to find a solution for millions of patients who need to wear an exposed PICC line.

That led to founding PICCPerfect with Yousef Al-Humaidhi, then also a Babson student. PICCPerfect, which is managed by Levy and other Babson students and recent graduates, manufactures fashionable medical accessories. Its first product is a PICC line cover, which safely protects the exposed line with an attractive, stretchy piece of fabric that can be worn in public without embarrassment.



Photo provided by Lisa Summerville

From left, PICCPerfect's Emily Levy and Maria del mar Gomez.

Levy's presentation to the conference, attended by more than 50 people at the Chestnut Innovation Center in Amesbury, won her company the chance to compete regionally in InnovatHER, the SBA Summit for women-owned businesses. The top three national winners receive prizes of \$40,000 for first prize, \$20,000 for second and \$10,000 for first.

SBA's InnovatHER, the Innovating for Women Business Summit on March 17 in Washington, D.C., will bring together creative ideas to support women's efforts to push the limits, break the glass ceiling and create long-term, positive changes in gender equality, the SBA web site states. The pitch session in Amesbury on Dec. 2 was organized through 28 Carrots, an organization founded by Lisa Christine Summerville of Newburyport as a platform to connect women globally and leverage the power of the community for growth and celebration. The organization, 28 Carrots, is also a place for powerful ideation and creativity, according to its web site.

Summerville's event at the

Chestnut Innovation Center attracted 13 women-owned businesses from throughout New England. The managing director of Bateau Media, Summerville narrowed the field to five, each of which made presentations in the contest.

The other four presenting companies were The Dinner Daily, Diabetic Dabs, Precious Skin Elixirs and Green Pinata Toy Share.

The Dinner Daily, created by Laurin Mills, a former Ernst & Young CPA, is an on-line service that "solves a frustrating and universal problem families face each day: how to put a healthy dinner on the table every night quickly and affordably," Mills wrote in her presentation.

Each week, Dinner Daily develops meal plans, complete with a list of ingredients and linked to on-line coupons for local grocery stores.

For an annual subscription of \$48, the meal plans, which cost on average less than \$85 for the groceries, will feed a family of five dinner for a week. Mills estimates that the plans will save up to \$2,500 per year.

Elizabeth Sacco, founder of

Diabetic Dabs in Middleton, was a stay-at-home Mom who turned entrepreneur after her son was diagnosed with diabetes. She grew frustrated that her son would wipe on his clothes and other fabrics the excess blood from the testing. So she developed and patented a non-toxic, highly absorbent wipe that cleans away the excess blood. The Dabs fit in any blood glucose kit.

Precious Skin Elixirs, owned by Marissa Bethoney of Boxford, is a collection of nine environmentally friendly skin care products. The company is talking with Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue stores about putting the products on its shelves.

Green Pinata Toy Share solves the parents' problem that children get bored of their toys quickly. The company, owned by Shava Kashalkar, offers a subscription service where parents can rent toys. Every few weeks families can exchange five toys for new ones, allowing children from six months to five years old to continue their path of development and stay excited about their toys.

The two subscription services, offered by the company, are \$24.99 a month for toy exchanges every six weeks or \$39.99 for exchanges every four weeks.

The Innovation Center hosted the event because it views women-owned companies as likely tenants at the center or as partners with the center's existing tenants. Robert O'Brien, the CEO, said of the 25 companies housed by the Amesbury center, six are women-owned companies.

For more information on 28 Carrots, or if you own a woman-owned business and need office space to rent, email [lisa@bateaumedia.com](mailto:lisa@bateaumedia.com) or visit [www.28Carrots.com](http://www.28Carrots.com).

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