

Finalists selected for health challenge

Posted Monday, January 21, 2019 3:45 pm

By Tony Dobrowolski, Berkshire Eagle Staff

NORTH ADAMS — Three entities with Berkshire County connections are among the five regional life sciences startups that have been selected as finalists in the Berkshire Health Technology Challenge that is being conducted by Lever, the North Adams-based business incubator.

A panel of investment professionals will select the winner during a "Shark Tank" style "pitch day" on May 9. The first place prize is \$25,000 in seed money. The goal for each startup is to present the most scalable business model associated with their health application. All five teams will be coached by Lever staff and expert mentors between now and May.

The Berkshire-based finalists are Thrivetext of Pittsfield, MyCoreFloor of Williamstown and ClearPlan Connect, whose co-founder is Donald Burt, the chief medical officer for Berkshire Healthcare Systems. Joe Diver, an innovative health strategist at Baystate Health, is Burt's business partner.

The other finalists are ClearView, which is based in both Springfield and Hartford, Conn.; and 21st Century Biotech of Amherst, co-founded by four UMass-Amherst students.

The five startups were named finalists based on their application in the life sciences, their high growth potential, their likelihood of attracting investment capital, and their ability to create jobs in the region.

ClearView has created the ClearView Tracheostomy Simulator, a device intended to fill a void in comprehensive medical training with the goal of reducing complications related to tracheostomy mismanagement. A tracheostomy is a surgical procedure that creates an opening through the neck into the trachea or windpipe.

21st Century Biotech intends to develop bandage technologies that heal wounds faster. Thrivetext, founded by Dr. Lara Aillon-Sohl, a diplomat of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, is a preventive health text messaging program. My Core Floor is an online subscription-based program that empowers women by educating them about their bodies and offering solutions to several medical problems. Local physical therapist and pelvic floor specialist Brittany Cappiello co-founded My Core Floor with physical therapist Dave Armet. The group's team also includes Robin Dufour, Nicole Armbrust and Andrea Wasylow. CarePlanConnect is a cloud-based platform that enables evidence-based interventions across the continuum of care.

This is the third challenge competition sponsored by Lever, which was founded in 2014 to develop a robust entrepreneurial system in the Berkshires. The winner of the second competition, a manufacturing innovation challenge, is scheduled to be selected on Thursday.

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