



ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNITIES

A Pathway to Prosperity



Source: *The West Virginia Hub*, September 10 2019, provided by [The Hub](#)

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This pitch competition is by the community for the community in Southern WV, *by Terry Bartley*

Kris Payne is the business owner of Screen Saver Cell Phone and Computer Repair in Pineville, West Virginia. He opened the doors of his business last year, after participating in one of The HIVE's small business pitch competitions.

"The experience absolutely motivated me to do something about my community," Payne said.

Now Payne, along with other Wyoming County volunteers, hope to host a pitch competition of their own.

They have called it the WyCo Pitch Fair.



"The whole reason we wanted to do this was that the people's vote counts for everything," Payne said, "It's 100% by the people and for the people."

This team of volunteers worked together to compose an entry form that helped potential and current small business owners craft a bit of a business plan in order to enter the competition. Team member Emily Paige Cook said it was important to the team that all participants had a fully formed business idea.

"We asked the most important questions to get a sense of what they were doing," Cook said, "It proves they are serious."



As an incentive, the team plans to present the winner with a cash prize. They have gathered sponsorships from area businesses, including Thompson and Litton Engineering, EL Robinson Engineering and Summit Community Bank. However, according to volunteer Hannah Saunders, the team plans to offer a bit more.

“We want to give the chance for members of the community to feel like they’re helping us grow Wyoming County,” Saunders said, “We have just launched a [GoFundMe](#) Campaign and we are excited that every dollar raised will go to our eventual winner.”

Saunders said the team believes it is important to involve the community in this decision. She said that if this business is going to be in Pineville, it needs to be something the community will support.

The crowdfunding campaign is only one way the team wishes to accomplish this. The first round of the competition will involve every finalist having a video featured on the county’s Economic Development Authority’s social media account. The amount of reactions the video receives will represent 50% of their score.

Next, the team will host the WyCo Pitch Fair on the lawn of the Wyoming County Courthouse on September 29th at 1 p.m. They will be hosting a brunch, in collaboration with the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition and WVU Extension. There will also be kids’ games provided by local organizations. At the event, finalists will have the opportunity to present pitches for their businesses. The community will then vote on the person they believe have the best business idea. These votes will make up the remainder of the participants’ scores.

“These businesses will be serving the community,” said Christy Laxton, Wyoming County Economic Development Director, “We want people to know they have the power to change their community.”

