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Cal Poly Startup Wins \$5,000 Prize at Central Coast TechPitch Competition

SAN LUIS OBISPO — Superior Solutions Manufacturing, a startup based out of the SLO HotHouse in downtown San Luis Obispo, took home the \$5,000 Grand Prize Award at the fourth annual TechPitch competition, where six Central Coast companies pitched their businesses to a panel of expert judges.

The event, held recently at the Alex Madonna Expo Center, was a joint effort of the Cal Poly Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship (CIE), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC), Softec, and the Economic Vitality Corp.

TechPitch seeks to reward local tech startups by allowing them to gain exposure in their community and meet with potential investors.

Doug Hutcheson, former CEO of Leap Wireless, which was acquired by AT&T in March 2014, was the featured keynote speaker. He encouraged the audience of more than 200 young entrepreneurs and seasoned veterans to invest in the entrepreneurial ecosystem around the Central Coast.

"Entrepreneurialism is a state of being," Hutcheson said. "You can have great entrepreneurialism in any community; it's a mindset."

Superior Solutions Manufacturing won the Grand Prize Award and the Audience Choice Award for its LiftGator, a removable lift gate that attaches to any pickup truck and is capable of lifting up to 1,000 pounds. The company will pitch its product in Santa Barbara in November to Tech Coast Angels, the largest angel investment group in the U.S.

Additional finalists, selected from a group of more than 25 applicants, included: Salty Girl Seafood from Santa Barbara; Tandemtech Engineering, San Luis Obispo; The Cardboard Guys, San Luis Obispo; FuelBox, Santa Barbara; and RVPlusYou, San Luis Obispo.

The finalists were judged by a panel of entrepreneurs, investors and industry experts that included Jo Anne Miller, co-founder of SLO Seed Ventures; Paul Meyer, managing partner of TechCXO; Laura Pickering, partner of Innovation Quest; Rick Stollmeyer, co-founder and CEO of MINDBODY Inc.; S. Brett Whitaker, founder of Whitaker Construction; and Helio Fialho, founder of LeftLane Sports and CEO of Auspient Inc.

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