

*Belfast, June 18, 2014*

**WINNER ANNOUNCED IN THE IRELAND FUNDS' 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION**

Alexandra Milne has won the top prize of €10,000 for her business Little Deli, in The Ireland Funds' third annual Business Plan Competition, hosted by Northern Ireland Science Park (NISP) CONNECT in Belfast. Little Deli is a solution that lets customers easily and efficiently pre-order and pre-pay for their lunch from local delis and cafes, at their own convenience. The first and second runners-up were awarded money of €5,000 and €1,000 for their business ideas.

The competition is modeled on a similar initiative run at Harvard Business School and aims to nurture creativity and hone entrepreneurial skills amongst recent graduates and post-graduate students.

The four finalists from Belfast, Dublin and Cork were among 15 teams to complete a training programme that helped them develop their business ideas and create a competitive pitch. The four young entrepreneurs then pitched their ideas to a judging panel of business leaders, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs in the competition.

The Business Plan Competition kicks off the 2014 Worldwide Ireland Funds Conference, an annual coming together of philanthropists and business, political, and cultural leaders. This year's conference will be held in Belfast from June 19 – 21 and will focus on the progress of The Worldwide Ireland Funds *Promising Ireland* Campaign, which is on target to achieve its goal of raising \$200 million for non-profit organizations across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Worldwide Ireland Funds' President and CEO, Kieran McLoughlin said: "Through The Ireland Funds' Business Plan Competition we provide exceptional early-stage entrepreneurs the opportunity to get advice on their business plans and pitching from leading business executives, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists from Northern Ireland and the US. Today we have seen four outstanding pitches for exciting new businesses and we look forward to reading more about our finalists' success."

Announcing the winner, William S. McKiernan, founder of the Competition and founder of CyberSource Corporation said: "The judging panel was very impressed with the high quality of business plans and pitches. I warmly congratulate all of the finalists and participants in this year's Business Plan Competition. I'm especially pleased with the participation from Northern Ireland this year. I am an investor in Northern Ireland and currently chairman of Bitnet Technologies. At Bitnet, all our product development is done in Belfast so I know the quality of the engineering and business talent in Northern Ireland. It is great to see that talent showcased in this competition."

The challenging training programme delivered in May by Dublin City University Ryan Academy and sponsored by Bank of Ireland promotes an entrepreneurial mindset and innovation focus among existing Irish businesses and start-ups through training, supports and finance.

Julie Ann O'Hare, Director Business Banking Bank of Ireland UK said: "Bank of Ireland is committed to supporting the growth of Northern Ireland businesses. They are the life blood of our private sector. Bank of Ireland works in collaboration with many strategic partners across and beyond Northern Ireland to encourage investment in enterprise and support the young talent and entrepreneurial spirit that we see here today. I am delighted to congratulate Alexandra from Little Deli as the overall winner and Stephen from Ruach Music the 1<sup>st</sup> runner who is also from Northern Ireland. It's a testament to the business talent in Northern Ireland which should be nurtured and supported."

In addition to sponsoring the training programme for short listed teams, Bank of Ireland also provides a banking mentor to the winning team to provide advice and direction to the team as they work towards commercialising their plan.

For more information on The Worldwide Ireland Funds and the *Promising Ireland* Campaign visit [www.theirelandfunds.org](http://www.theirelandfunds.org)  
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The shortlisted finalists in the Ireland Fund's Annual Business Plan competition

**Alexandra Milne, University of Ulster, Little Deli**

The Little Deli is a solution that lets customers easily and efficiently pre-order and pre-pay for their lunch from local delis and cafes, at their own convenience. By ordering through the App, customers can skip the queue and save their valuable time letting them order from anywhere at any time. By using the app, it enables delis to prepare orders earlier, making their rush hour more efficient, productive and profitable. With Little Deli, both delis and customers win.

Alex just won Enterprise Ireland's Student Entrepreneur of the Year.

**Stephen Henderson, Kilkeel High School, Ruach Music**

Ruach Music manufacture Cajons, wooden box-shaped percussive instruments that are most often associated with late 18<sup>th</sup> century Afro-Peruvian music. As a business, Ruach seek to manufacture the highest quality handmade products that musicians

**Sarah Dineen, University College Cork, Uniwink**

UniWink.com is a new online e-learning platform allowing Irish Third Level Students to access and share top quality course material and schedule grinds with top college tutors.

Sarah has participated in the UCC IGNITE Graduate Business Start-Up Programme since October 2013. She became the youngest female entrepreneur to receive an investment offer from RTE's Dragons' Den.

**Norma O'Mahony, University College Dublin, Effy**

Effy provides an optimised, learning based, roster creation platform. It enables improved communication and collaboration between managers and employees, which increases employee satisfaction and has a knock on effect on the experience of the consumer. Effy also uses datamining to generate compliance and HR reports. Effy also streamlines many HR processes, such as the payroll, by exporting data from the roster.

Norma O'Mahony and Owen McCabe were finalists in Accenture's Leaders of Tomorrow 2014 programme.