

For immediate release

Four Niagara businesses steal the show at FirstOntario Credit Union's 1Awards Gala

Local small businesses celebrated with \$125,000 in cash and in-kind services

St. Catharines ON, June 22, 2018– Hamill Machine Company, Hometown Ice Cream, Stathletes and Thorpe Concepts shared \$125,000 in cash and in-kind services as the 2018 Niagara 1Awards winners were announced. The winners were revealed at a gala event at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre on Thursday.

“It’s no surprise to see so many dedicated entrepreneurs and successful businesses in the Niagara Region,” said James Lefebvre, Senior Vice President, Member Experience, and Business Services at FirstOntario Credit Union. “The 1Awards is a great way for our credit union to feature the winners and the finalists, who make Niagara the economic force that it is today. There is so much creativity and talent in this competition”.

This year’s winners represent small sample of the high quality applicants that were received this year. Hamill Machine Company develops products for wine, beer and food sectors for international customers and Hometown Ice Cream crafts all natural ice cream treats in downtown St. Catharines. Rooted in Niagara, Thorpe Concepts delivers hand-crafted kitchens and cabinetry and Stathletes is a sports analytics company with a focus on hockey. All of these business owners call Niagara home and their passion for business, community and local pride all came through in their pitches.

A group of 10 finalists presented their business plans and their ideas about future growth to a panel of judges just few weeks ago. After a tough deliberation, the judges went with four front-runners, instead of the usual three, and prizes were allotted to each business based on their needs.

The Niagara 1Awards competition is an important way that FirstOntario encourages and supports small business development. The program began in Hamilton seven years ago and this is the third year for the Niagara version. Since the program’s inception, FirstOntario and 1Awards partners have invested more than \$1 million into the Hamilton, Halton and Niagara small business landscape. This year’s Niagara’s partners include Niagara College, Innovate Niagara, Form and Affect, Niagara Dailies, KPMG and Lancaster, Brooks and Welch LLP.

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[About FirstOntario Credit Union](#)

FirstOntario has been serving Members in the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario since 1939. FirstOntario is the province's second largest credit union with more than 118,000 Members and \$5 billion in assets under management. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us today at FirstOntario.com.

[The1Awards](#)

The goal of the 1Awards is to help local businesses get to the next level by recognizing and rewarding ideas for growth and community-focused plans. This is the third annual 1Awards small business competition in Niagara. A separate 1Awards competition started seven years ago in Hamilton and now also includes Burlington and Oakville businesses. Established businesses must demonstrate measurable growth such as workplace expansion, innovation and economic impact in their local communities to be eligible for cash and specialized in-kind services provided by 1Awards partners. Niagara partners include Niagara College, Innovate Niagara, Form and Affect, Niagara Dailies, KPMG and Lancaster, Brooks and Welch LLP.

[Hamill Machine Company](#)

Since 1948, our innovative company has transformed to include, welders, millwrights, mechanical engineers and a P. Eng. We develop products for the wine, beer, and food sectors and we've successfully designed, built and sold equipment for the Microgreens Industry which led to a spin off company called Hamill Agricultural Processing Solutions. We have six machines in the US, two in Canada and multiple quotes all over the world. We are developing an automatic garlic cutting machine and our aluminum wine barrel racks can be found locally in the Niagara Region and as far away as the Maritimes.

[Hometown Ice Cream](#)

Hometown Ice Cream makes all-natural ice creams, sorbets, and sherbets from scratch in our downtown St. Catharines shop. With no preservatives or artificial ingredients, each scoop is the product of hard work, happiness and the finest ingredients we can find! Our cones, cups, and take-home pints hold the best local and seasonal flavours and our partnerships with local craft brewers, winemakers, and distillers make for a unique Niagara specialty scoop! Stop by for a treat before an Ice Dogs game, on a date night, or with the family!

[Stathletes](#)

Stathletes is a sports analytics company, focused on hockey that statistically breaks down multiple facets of a player's game. We provide unique and accurate insights into their performance. Our data products range from an online report generation system, pre-game scouting, post-game wrap ups, agent & trainer packages, players, media and fantasy data to give near real time accurate and scalable competitive advantage to Stathletes' clients.

[Thorpe Concepts](#)

Thorpe Concepts designs and builds beautiful handcrafted kitchens and cabinetry. Caleb Thorpe founded the company in his parents' garage at the age of 24, growing it to a new 5,000 square foot facility in St. Catharines. We deliver custom work to each client, avoiding the tempting trend of pre-manufactured ordering. We also build handmade range hoods for other cabinetry companies as part of the Thorpe Concepts Range Collection. We have a passion to see revitalization amongst the wood trades in Niagara Region, inspired by English craftsman who are considered more than tradesman or labourers, but rather interior architects and artists. We value true craftsmanship, our clients, our team and our Niagara roots.