

## **2017 InnovateHER Challenge**

### **Statement of Support**

This year's Northeast Indiana's InnovateHER local challenge event was again blessed with five strong and very exceptional women showcasing their creativity and companies. It was difficult for the judging panel to select only one winner to submit for the semi-final round.

While all five businesses received high marks in the three elements pertaining to the competition, the judging panel was favorably impressed with the tenacity, perseverance, and resolve that the winning team demonstrated in facing down significant adversity to achieve their dreams.

Marna Pacheco and Susan Hickok co-owners of CapeAble Sensory Products are the winners of the Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana 2017 InnovateHER Challenge.

The passion demonstrated for their products and goals; the all-out efforts to be successful; the creative solutions to overcome many problems; and the willingness to go that extra mile; all provided insight into the future success of this young company.

CapeAble Sensory Products manufactures weighted sensory products and has created a new standard in the market with its line of plush weighted blankets, dignified weighted wearables and sensory enrichment tools. The products are manufactured with a patented new product design that provides higher quality and more uniform distribution of weight throughout each product.

The equipment utilized in the manufacturing process has also been designed and developed by Marna and Susan specifically for their needs and is in the process for a patent application.

The impetus for the development of the products and the start of this business came from the experiences both partners have encountered in raising adopted children traumatized with Early Childhood Trauma, resulting from their times in orphanages and US Foster Care.

Both mothers needed effective, practical, and easy tools to help calm, comfort, and provide focus to their children. These products have a proven track record of effectiveness, with scientific studies in support of the benefits weighted products can provide. The Company has refined and expanded the concepts into an extensive and innovative line of Sensory Products.

In early 2014 Capeable Sensory Products connected with a local contract manufacturer to make the sensory products for the company. Unable to deliver appropriate quality, volume, or timely product, the outside contract producer terminated the arrangements in early 2016.

Undaunted by the failure and adversity, Marna and Susan were able to recover all the intellectual property, write a business plan, and apply for and receive an SBA loan in July.

## Page 2

Early that month (July) the company acquired building space; set up a manufacturing area and retail showroom and began developing processes and machinery to manufacture the product themselves. From April 2016 through January of 2017 nominal sales were garnished from left over inventory.

By January 2017 the proof of concept with the machine and processes were finalized and working. Selling from newly manufactured product began in February. The introduction of a website in February supported by presentations at various trade shows around the country increased monthly sales by March to \$24,000.

There is little doubt that the success to date testifies to the need in the market place for the high quality, attractive sensory products, provided by CapeAble Sensory Products. Likewise, no doubt remains as to the ability to be commercialized. What does remain to be determined is the speed at which the company can grow and sustain itself from its own cash flow: hence the entry into the InnovateHER Challenge to acquire greatly needed operating capital.

As to the impact on women and families: any mother that has had to deal with children that have issues at school because of lack of focus; or autistic children having nightly difficulty in sleeping , will appreciate the benefit of these products.

The products manufactured and sold by Capeable have the potential to relieve care takers, most often women, of the burden of continuously living with the stress of these type of issues with family members: not only with children but with parents and siblings as well. Freedom from that responsibility can enhance quality of life and lead to better performance or opportunities in career choices.

It is due to these factors that the judging panel has selected CapeAble Sensory Products as the winners of this year's InnovateHER Challenge for Northeast Indiana

- **Demonstrating the grit, creative, determination to be successful in the face of adversity.**
- **Demonstrating a strong need in the market place for these products.**
- **Demonstrating the ability to commercialize the business.**
- **Significantly impacting and empowering women and families.**

*Steve Rinehart*