

InnovateHer 2016 SBDC at Wright State University Competition Winner

Winning Individual: Mollie Verdier

Company Name: BTS LLC

Product Name: Therapals.com

Company Address: 1254 State Route 589, Sidney, Ohio 45365

City, State and place of Incorporation: Sidney, Ohio

Product/service website: www.therapals.com

Telephone # of project lead: 937-726-9988

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Therapals is an online therapeutic approach using video modeling for families with special needs children that also provides a social platform to promote friendship and entrepreneurship among like-minded peers. Therapals matches children up across the world based on their interests, abilities and disabilities and then we call on those same children to teach other kids who are just like them a skill that they have mastered.

Submitted by:

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It is with great pleasure that we submit Mollie Verdier, owner of BTS LLC, to participate in the SBA's InnovateHer 2016 Competition. Mollie was chosen by the SBDC at Wright State University as our local winner because we felt that the service provided through their website, Therapals.com, strongly met all the criteria outlined in the competition rules. Our selection method was a two stage process which involved a business plan review and a pitch to a panel of three judges.

Impact on Women and Families

Mollie demonstrated that Therapals.com provided measurable impact on the lives of women and families. They provide a service by which families can find affordable help for children with special needs in a variety of ways. Through a subscription based service, children can access videos teaching them to master skills which are as varied as tying shoes, and learning how to overcome speech difficulties (such as pronouncing the letter R). This service can reduce costs and help alleviate the worry and strain on mothers and families struggling to help their children learn skills and maintain friendships despite their special needs.

Several aspects of Therapals.com make it unique and impactful, one of which is allowing children who have mastered a particular skill to become the teacher, and produce their own teaching video (all of which are vetted by appropriate professionals before posting to the site). This has two benefits – children often learn better from other children – especially from a child who has experienced similar difficulties; and as most people who have taught know, teaching others is the most effective tool for understanding and retaining knowledge themselves.

Therapals.com also provides a way for children with similar abilities and disabilities to connect, providing much needed opportunity to interact on a social level. Often children with special needs are made fun of and Therapals.com can give them a chance for esteem building social interactions.

Another way that Therapals.com provides impact is by involving parents (and teachers) in the process. They are given access to the logs and history of the child's use of the site, their feedback is used to determine the need for additional videos, and they can interact with each other for support if they choose.

Potential for Commercialization

Therapals.com has a demonstrated potential for commercialization. Currently the site has over 450 users acquired mainly through word of mouth. This should translate into exponential growth as more and more customers share and recommend the service. Plans are underway to expand into schools, develop an app and begin to market into rural areas where services are sparse.

There is also a trend in the nation toward telemedicine which should help to make people more comfortable with the idea of accessing services online.

Fills a need in the Marketplace

Mollie's impetus for starting her company was to solve a problem in her own family. Her daughter, who had speech difficulties, didn't meet the criteria to receive services through her school. This impairment was having a huge effect on her self-esteem and performance at school and the family found that paying

for private services on their own was extremely burdensome financially. Mollie came to the realization that this was a problem shared by many families so she worked on a solution that would benefit others dealing with the same issues.

As Mollie spoke to our panel of judges, it became apparent that there is unquestionably a market for a service of this type. Her presentation struck a chord with our all-female panel because they all had first-hand experience with the difficulties associated with finding help for children with special needs and varying levels of developmental delays.

In conclusion, BTS LLC, through their site Therapals.com, provides women and families cost effective resources to help their children with varying degrees of special needs overcome skill mastery, social interaction and self-esteem challenges. This results in improvement in the lives of not only the individual child, but the entire family. This service has demonstrated potential for commercialization and is moving forward to increase their reach. Currently the company utilizes the services of volunteers in a variety of professional areas and with increased income the company will be able to hire these volunteers and others, increasing their economic impact in their community. Finally, there is a demonstrated market for Therapals services throughout the country which is increasing; diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder and other special needs has increased over the past decade while funding for special education has decreased.

This business truly impacts the lives of women and families and is a strong candidate for the InnovateHer 2016 challenge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kim Woodbury". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kim" and last name "Woodbury" clearly legible.

Kim Woodbury
Interim Director
Small Business Development Center at Wright State University