**InnovateHER Finalist Submission**

**Cover Page**

1. Winning Individual’s Information

Name: Cynthia Salbato

Company Name: Tree House Secret Book Club

Product/Service Name: Secret Book Club

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Website: <http://thesecretbookclub.org/>

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1. Host Information

Name: Sustainable Valley Technology Group

Address: 100 E. Main st. Medford, OR 97501

POC: Rosetta Shaw

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1. Summary of Product/Service

TreeHouse Secret Book Club is an online storytelling game that uses the hero's journey, life skills and DIY projects to bring children's best stories to life. The platform combines monthly story genres with 1st person journal writing prompts and game concepts inspired by card games, role-playing games, video games, and more to guide children through the creative process of writing stories that cast them as the hero of the narrative.

1. Number of Applicants

8 women-led innovative companies for women and families competed on November 21 in Ashland, OR.

**Letter of Support**

To the SBA Selection Committee,

On November 21st, we hosted our regional qualifying event for the SBA InnovateHER competition. We had 8 amazing and inspiring applicants, the overwhelming majority of whom were from Ashland, OR. Our panel of female judges, three very experienced and professional business consultants, unanimously agreed on the first place winner, Cynthia Salbato.

Salbato’s company best satisfied the Challenge criteria and presented the greatest potential for success. Though helping women indirectly by supporting their children, this service has the potential to greatly impact the lives of women and families all over the world. Women play a key role in the education and personal growth of their children and this platform offers a solution for women to help guide their children to identify their own goals, challenges, supporters, and overcome obstacles by using the traditional hero’s journey. This structure not only helps children write their own stories, it helps them to develop awareness of their own goals in their life and how to accomplish them.

Teachers face a constant struggle to engage and inspire their students. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2014 over 80% of elementary and middle school teachers were women. Another way in which the service will affect women is in offering these teachers a way to empower their students to tell their own stories and share their own narratives.

The Secret Book Club is a virtual platform that inspires children to step outside of their role of passive consumers by generating their own content and learning life skills along the way. Every month is designed with a unique theme and in October, the children involved in the Secret Book Club used the program to create a product or service and bring it to market. Over two years, using a test platform for the game in the local community, Secret Book Club has helped 14 children develop and bring a products to market, helped raise $24,000 for the local school foundations through interactive events, and produced 14 story games that have been tested by a local group of young participants. The activities provided by the Secret Book Club encourage children to learn goal setting, positive psychology, fitness, mindful practices, and financial literacy. With the launch of the online platform, this impact will grow exponentially.

The potential for commercialization is very large scale. Because this is a virtual platform the market is global and the service is very scalable. The platform is monetized through a monthly subscription fee per child and the potential to enter classrooms and clubs in addition to individual homes adds the possibility of finding grant funding and sponsorships to supplement income from member fees. This service has a very real possibility of impacting families around the world and is poised to do so as it will be launching as an adjunct component of Whyville.net, one of the first virtual learning environments for children with over 7.5 million registered users.

Children love to make up stories and creating together is an important part of the parent-child relationship. Unlike other story creation products, Secret Book Club encourages the application of the lessons learned through play to real life situations and provides a platform to build real networks between communities. This platform will address a serious and growing problem both in the US and around the world. The US is ranked 12th out of 20 ‘high income’ countries for literacy and 44 million adults are unable to read even simple stories to their children. Six out of 10 households do not even buy a single book per year yet all children are expected to learn to read in public schools. By captivating the imagination of children young, the Secret Book Club can help fill this need in the marketplace and also provide an outlet for children to creatively identify and accomplish their own life goals.

Because of the way the Secret Book Club addressed the three key issues put forth by the SBA, measurable impact on women and families, potential for commercialization, and fulfillment of a need in the marketplace, our panel of judges selected Cynthia Salbato as our finalist.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity to host the event in Southern Oregon and thank you for considering our finalist as a possible competitor for your event in March. I am more than happy to answer any addition followup questions you may have regarding our event or our finalist.

Sincerely,



Rosetta Shaw

Program Manager

Sustainable Valley Technology Group

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