

SAN JOAQUIN ANGELS

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\$20,000 IN AWARDS FOR WINNING ENTREPRENEURS San Joaquin Angels Seek Entries for the San Joaquin Entrepreneur Challenge

(Stockton, Calif.)—A total of at least \$10,000 in cash and \$13,000 in professional services will be awarded to the two winning entrepreneurs when the San Joaquin Angels investment group, in collaboration with regional educational institutions and economic development groups, stages the third annual San Joaquin Entrepreneur Challenge on Wednesday, February 29, 2012, and Wednesday, March 21, 2012. Professional services will include legal, accounting, marketing and general business assistance.

The San Joaquin Entrepreneur Challenge is an American Idol style multi-round business plan competition including audience and expert judging. Challenge organizers are seeking individuals or start-up companies with a great idea to compete during two public events for selection as the most persuasive business opportunity. The audience and judges will select two finalists eligible for the top prizes and an opportunity for further discussions with potential investors and advisors.

The Entrepreneur Challenge consists of a four-step competitive process:

1. Applications submitted online by February 5, 2012, will be reviewed by a screening committee of business and academic experts who will select the best business opportunities for the initial public round of competition.
2. On February 29 each selected contestant will participate in a two-minute drill to describe his or her business. The audience and a panel of judges will select several businesses to move on to the next stage.
3. On March 21 the remaining entrepreneurs will have five minutes to present a more detailed analysis of their businesses before the audience and a panel of judges, who will select several finalists eligible for the final competition.

4. The final competition will also be held at the March 21 event, where each finalist will participate in a simulated challenging business situation. Audience and judges will then select the winner and runner-up for the prizes.

The previous two years' Entrepreneur Challenges attracted applications from over 150 aspiring entrepreneurs with the public events drawing over 300 audience participants each year. This year's Challenge is again being organized by business and community leaders from San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced counties. Entrepreneurs from the three counties must apply online to compete in the Challenge at <http://www.sjchallenge.com>. Workshops to help entrepreneurs prepare their applications will be offered in all three counties, with details about time, location, etc. available on the SJ Challenge web site.

Jamie Norwood, of 2011 SJ Entrepreneur Challenge winner Amalia's Cocina, shared her view of the events: "The San Joaquin Entrepreneur Challenge was a fabulous experience that opened the doors for our business to make connections with local business leaders that are continuing to offer guidance and advice as we move forward with the expansion of our business."

The San Joaquin Entrepreneur Challenge is part of a broad regional economic development strategy to stimulate business start-ups and job creation in the San Joaquin Valley. The Challenge is being presented by the San Joaquin Angels in partnership with the University of the Pacific, San Joaquin Partnership, Business Council of San Joaquin County Inc., Stanislaus Economic Development & Workforce Alliance, Merced County Department of Commerce, Aviation and Economic Development, NEC San Joaquin Delta College Small Business Development Center, and the Alliance Small Business Development Center.

The Event Sponsors are Central Valley Fund and Wells Fargo Bank, with additional cash sponsors including Bank of Agriculture & Commerce, Central Valley Community Bank, Farmers & Merchants Bank, Rabobank, PG&E, Bank of Stockton, US Bank, Valley Business Start-up and The Record. In-kind service awards are being offered by Croce & Company, accountants; Downey Brand, attorneys; External Resources Inc., business advisors and Never Boring Design, marketing and public relations.

The February 29 and March 21 events will be held from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Stockton Golf & Country Club, 3800 West Country Club Boulevard, Stockton, Calif. Members of the public are invited to attend for a cover charge for each event of \$12.00 prepaid or \$15.00 at the door.

Mark Plovnick, San Joaquin Angels President and University of the Pacific Director of Economic Development, stated the organization's mission: "San Joaquin Angels is a private syndicate of angel investors who share an ambition to collaboratively invest in, advise and grow promising start-up and early stage companies in the San Joaquin region."

Plovnick continued, "We hope that the San Joaquin Entrepreneur Challenge will help stimulate business development in our region by encouraging aspiring local entrepreneurs to pursue their goals through an entertaining business plan competition that offers mentoring, cash prizes and access to investors."

For more information and to register to attend the events: <http://www.sjchallenge.com>.