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**DOWNTOWN
LONG BEACH
ALLIANCE**

RIISING BUSINESS STARS SHARE \$20,000 GRANT FOR PITCHFEST

Three local entrepreneurs win DLBA business pitch competition to take their businesses to the next level

(LONG BEACH, CA – June 10, 2021) After an intensive business pitch session, The Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA) today announced that three up-and-coming entrepreneurs were selected to receive grants totaling \$20,000 to fuel their small businesses. The Pitchfest Incubator Award winners included the following:

- Janine Solano, \$10,000: to create a new pet supply kiosk for Shoreline Village. The business, Dopey's Dog House, plans to serve pet owners who enjoy bringing their pets to the marina.
- Elva Garcia, \$5,000: to grow Mariscos El Compa Ivan that serves authentic Mexican seafood in a family style by the beach.
- Saren Rem, \$5,000: to support Sarenity Floral, a new floral studio to teach in-person and online floral arrangement workshops and sell floral arrangements.

The award recipients were among a group of nine rising stars who pitched business plans to a panel of judges comprised of economic and community leaders.

“It was a privilege to serve as a judge for DLBA’s 2021 Entrepreneur & Small Business Education Series Pitchfest Competition. Hearing about all of the exciting new business ideas for our community was inspiring,” said Kourosh Davatolhagh, VP, Relationship Manager, Farmers & Merchants Bank. “Congratulations to the Incubator Award winners and a job well done to all of the entrepreneurs who participated.”

To qualify for DLBA’s Pitchfest, in its fourth year, business owners completed a series of modules over five weeks in the Entrepreneur and Small Business Education Series. The program is a partnership among DLBA, Long Beach State University’s Institute for Innovation & Entrepreneurship and Farmers & Merchants Bank.

“I am proud that DLBA is able to continue to create opportunities for local entrepreneurs to grow into successful businesses that will lead to enhancing our Downtown economy,” said Austin Metoyer, Economic Development & Policy Manager, DLBA. “The comprehensive education series is one of several DLBA programs to fuel budding businesses. As part of our ongoing efforts to support and grow small businesses, we plan to launch a diverse set of new grant programs this year including for retail pop-ups, entrepreneurs of color, and women-owned businesses.”

Pitchfest judges included Long Beach Councilwoman Cindy Allen, 2nd District, Walter Larkins, Chair, Long Beach Economic Development Commission, Loara Cadavona, Chair-Elect, DLBA Board of Directors, Sam Pierzina, Chair of the DLBA Economic Development Committee, and Davatolhagh, F&M Bank.

As legacy sponsor, Farmers & Merchant Bank has committed \$90,000 for award grants over three years (until 2023).

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About Downtown Long Beach Alliance: DLBA is a non-profit, community-based organization whose mission is to cultivate, preserve and promote a healthy, safe, and prosperous Downtown. By balancing the interests of the residents, as well as businesses, the DLBA creates tangible progress by way of vested interest and solidified partnerships across local, municipal, and commercial lines. For additional information, visit www.downtownlongbeach.org, or follow on Facebook @downtownlongbeach, and on Twitter and Instagram @DLBA.