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Winners Announced at 2020 CT Entrepreneur Awards; Leading Entrepreneurs Recognized for Innovation, Achievements by Community Voting, Global Judges Panel

The Connecticut Entrepreneur Awards announced an impressive array of 24 winners, along with 68 runners-up, during the **2020 Connecticut Entrepreneur Awards**, which were presented during an awards ceremony conducted Monday evening which highlighted the state's growing innovation ecosystem.

The annual event celebrated Connecticut's leading entrepreneurs, ventures, and ecosystem elements that support them. Held virtually for the first time, the event was described as "big, bold, and audacious" as it celebrated businesses, organizations, and individuals from communities throughout the state, pursuing a range of activities and business opportunities.

Announcement of the winners followed an afternoon virtual expo and interactive product demonstrations, concurrent sessions, and panel discussions, and included the presentation of the first-ever Lifetime Achievement Awards, in addition to the results of the public voting and judges choices.

There were 15 Community Voting category winners and 9 Judges Selection category winners announced, along with honorable mention recipients. There were a total of 255 individuals, businesses, and organizations selected as finalists earlier this year – following a record-setting 404 nominations.

In the community, online voting, a winner and two honorable mention recipients in each category were announced, based on the community voting totals. The winners were:

CATEGORY	WINNERS - COMMUNITY VOTING
Entrepreneur (Scaling Company)	Maria F. Brown , West Hartford Lock Co. LLC, West Hartford
Entrepreneur (Scalable Venture)	Jessica Bittner , Lasting Impressions CT, New Milford
Entrepreneur (Main Street) New Milford	Gina M. Nisco , Positive Next Steps & College Plan Advisors,
Entrepreneur (Social Good)	Mark Mathias , Remarkable STEAM, Inc., Westport
Entrepreneur (Student)	McKenna Haz , SEAAV Athletics, Hamden
Venture (Revenue)	Momeez Choice (Lolleez), Southbury
Venture (Pre-Revenue)	FinTron Invest , Fairfield
Community Builder	Susan Lane , Lane Changers, Avon
Space	Makery Coworking , New Milford
Program	Masheen , Avon
Funding	Connecticut Innovations , New Haven
Economic Development	Tim Moore , Blue Haus Group, Hartford
Event	Stamford Innovation Week , Stamford
Education	Connecticut Data Collaborative , Hartford

Named as recipients of the first-ever CT Entrepreneurship **Lifetime Achievement Awards** were:

- **April Lukasik**, the founder and president of Bright & Early Children’s Learning Centers;
- **Bob Dorf**, a leading international Lean Startup and Customer Development expert; and serial entrepreneur
- **Steve Schwartz**, a serial entrepreneur who leads one of Connecticut’s fastest-growing companies.

They were honored during the event and featured in a special panel discussion.

In addition to the Community Voting categories in 2020, there were 9 categories of Judges Selections, determined by panels of more than two dozen expert judges from outside Connecticut who evaluated the finalists. Winners were:

CATEGORY	WINNERS - JUDGES SELECTION
Entrepreneur (Scaling Company)	Sara Deren , Experience Camps, Westport
Entrepreneur (Scalable Venture)	Armin Rad and Leila Daneshmandi , Encapsulate, Farmington
Entrepreneur (Main Street)	Daniel Flynn , DRF Consulting, Hamden
Entrepreneur (Social Good)	Danny Briere , The STEMIE Coalition (Acquired by The Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation), Mansfield Center
Entrepreneur (Student)	McKenna Haz , SEAAV Athletics, Quinnipiac University
Venture (Revenue)	Wellinks , New Haven
Venture (Pre-Revenue)	Cybrexa , New Haven
Community Builder	Mike Kaltschnee , Danbury Hackerspace, Danbury
Community Promoter	Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship & Innovation , East Hartford

“The quality and quantity of the finalists this year reflects the incredible growth of the entrepreneurial community in Connecticut,” said CT Entrepreneur Awards founder Bill Kenney. “Collectively, those selected as winners in their categories, those earning Honorable Mention, and all the finalists, have a strong impact on our state and its communities, and that’s good news for Connecticut. We look forward to hearing more about their progress in the coming years, and to the continued growth of entrepreneurship and economic independence in our state.”

A full list of winners, honorable mentions, and more highlights of the 2020 CT Entrepreneur Awards can be seen at [link](#).

2020 CT Entrepreneur Awards sponsors include The Entrepreneurship Foundation, Entrepreneurs’ Organization Connecticut, Keating Agency Insurance, ImageWorks, Litchfield Distillery, Murtha Cullina, Pratt & Whitney, Sound Web, UHY Advisors, Universal Connectivity, and Webster Bank.

The CT Entrepreneur Awards are a product of the CT Entrepreneur Event Organizers consortium, an all-volunteer cooperative effort of people and organizations that host and facilitate entrepreneur-facing events in Connecticut. (See a list of affiliated organizations at ctentrepreneurawards.com.)

The CT Entrepreneur Awards have been held annually since 2017, coordinated by the growing group of volunteers and led by founder Bill Kenney. The 2020 event was originally scheduled for April but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic and state safety guidelines. Nominations for 2021 open on December 1, 2020. For more information about the 2020 CT Entrepreneur Awards and plans for 2021, contact Bill Kenney at scallywag@ctevents.co.