



BOOST 2022

*Hosted at the Ed Kaplan Family Institute for
Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship*

delta institute 



PRESENTED BY:





Above: Trista Li wins BOOST 2018 for her start-up: KitcheNet.

FRONT COVER / From top left to bottom right: Jannice Newson as one of the winners of BOOST 2019 for her start-up, Lillian Augusta; Tessa Vierk as one of the winners of BOOST 2021 for her start-up, Chicago Tool Library; the team at Zumwalt Acres, the winning start-up of BOOST 2020; Christine Sorich, one of the winners of BOOST 2021 for her start-up, tinyshop; Dane Christianson, one of the winners of BOOST 2019 for his start-up, Block Bins.

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Special Thanks to VIP Supporters

Who We Are

EVENING PROGRAM

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About Delta Institute

Sidney Freitag-Fey, CFRE:
Senior Director, Development and Communications; Delta Institute

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Message from our Host

Niharika Hanglem:
Program Director, Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship &
Board of Directors Development Committee Co-Chair, Delta Institute

BOOST 2022 Finalist Pitches

Sana Jafri of babygami co
Maliaka Hill of Centreville Citizens for Change
Aleksandra Plewa of EcoShip
Rozina Kanchwala of Rewilding Acres

Voting period

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Presented by American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate and Social Impact &
United Airlines

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Special thank you to our event host, the [Ed Kaplan Family Institute for Innovation and Tech Entrepreneurship!](#)

Interview with Sana Jafri of babygami co.

Could you share a short summary about the mission/purpose of your start-up?

babygami co's mission is to get diverse families outside! We live into our mission by creating the first of its kind space-saving baby products and community. Our bottles are a standard ten ounces when fully open and collapse down to the size of a coaster.

What plans/goals do you have on the horizon you're looking forward to?

Qudsia, my co-founder, and I are passionate about enjoying life outside with our kids. But we quickly learned it wasn't easy juggling kids and all the stuff you need to carry. And, feeding and nourishing your baby is one of the most important jobs a parent has. We interviewed parents, and 75% said carrying space is a major issue when venturing outdoors or traveling.

There are collapsible cups, spoons, and now with babygami there will be a collapsible baby bottle that has a transitional top to a sippy cup and snack cup. You never need to stop exploring and you will have a product that will make it light and easy to do so.

We started babygami co to solve a simple problem: feed our children and have space in our backpacks. Additionally, what's unique about it is not only the design, which decreases the size of the bottle; but also our focus on sustainability through upcycling. A traditional baby bottle is used for one year, but we are designing differently and with an emphasis on sustainability. Our bottle will have interchangeable tops so that the same base bottle can be used for longer, almost up to five years. This innovation will have critical environmental impacts in that it will decrease the number of bottles that go to landfills each year and it will reduce the need for new materials which decreases greenhouse gas emissions.

Nurturing people and the planet are central values to babygami's vision. At babygami, we want to help build the next generation of nature and environmentalist lovers earlier! Qudsia and I enjoyed playing outside when we were kids, but we didn't get to experience the majesty and beauty of nature through more traditional outdoor activities until we were in our late 20s, early 30s. As such, babygami's mission is to get diverse families outside. We are not only building products, but also a diverse community of families through events. Monthly, we host an event that gets families outside from a hike, to learning about monarchs, to teaching best practices like leave no trace, etc. and more.



Learn more about babygami co by visiting [babygamico.com](https://www.babygamico.com).

BOOST 2022 FINALIST

CENTREVILLE CITIZENS FOR CHANGE

Interview with Maliaka Hill and Walter Byrd of Centreville Citizens for Change.

Could you briefly share a bit about your project/start-up? What you do and/or what problem you're trying to address?

Centreville is a small city of about 5,000 people and 5 square miles, and is the poorest city in the state of Illinois as well as one of the poorest cities in the nation, with a poverty rate nearing 50%. It is these characteristics that make it no surprise that Centreville has suffered one of the most egregious and longstanding environmental justice and public health issues that we've seen. Since the 1980s, pump stations that are designed to pump sewage away from neighborhoods have barely functioned, leading raw sewage to flood into streets and homes. The residents of Centreville fear for their health, suffering respiratory issues and other diseases due to the sewage. They fear for their financial well-being, becoming further entrenched in poverty as the flooding damages their homes and possessions. Centreville Citizens for Change provides direct assistance to its community members and uses a 'hands-on', community centered approach to fixing their community.



What plans/goals do you have on the horizon you're looking forward to?

We look forward to expanding our ongoing community repair work through fundraising and other opportunities like this, and helping the residents in our community save their homes and properties. We will continue to put pressure on the local governing agencies to ensure the underlying issues of storm and sewer water systems are fixed and maintained.

How can people get involved or support your work?

Visit our website, floodedandforgotten.com to donate and learn more about our current events. You can also follow and like us on Facebook at Centreville Citizens for Change!

Learn more about Centreville Citizens for Change by visiting floodedandforgotten.com.

BOOST 2022 FINALIST

ECOSHIP

Interview with Aleksandra Plewa of EcoShip.

Could you share a short summary about the mission/purpose of your start-up?

EcoShip is a community focused 501(c)(3) that collects gently used shipping materials from local communities and redistributes them to businesses, helping them cut costs and implement sustainable business practices.

Interesting! Tell us more!

EcoShip first started when I began collecting shipping materials for my partner's small business. He strived to be as sustainable as possible and one of those actions included reusing materials. Upon reaching out to individuals in Facebook groups, we quickly realized that many were looking to repurpose these materials. We started collecting from locals and soon, other e-commerce owners began reaching out, asking if we had any extra materials. This is when the idea of EcoShip formed. EcoShip now collects 8 different items and is partnered with 9 businesses that collect items on our behalf.

Every day, Amazon alone ships out 1.6 million packages. The company does not take back any of their packaging materials, leaving consumers with the task of disposing of them. Most of the items cannot be recycled in the Chicago Municipal blue bin system and must be dropped off at a store for recycling through a dedicated process such as those offered by TREX. However, even then, it has been questioned if the items are actually being recycled and turned into other items.

Packaging materials are designed to last for many uses, but instead, they become a single-use plastic. Our goal is to not only extend their lifespan and keep them out of landfills for as long as possible, but also to educate the public on how to properly dispose of these items when they do reach the end of their cycle ... Our goals are to increase our collection efforts, create new partnerships with brick and mortar businesses, and reach more businesses that could benefit from using EcoShip's materials. We want to be able to provide more locations and options for people to drop off their materials. We want more businesses to help the cause and reap the benefits of an EcoShip partnership. We want to engage more businesses that could integrate sustainable business practices.



Learn more about EcoShip by visiting ecoship.org.

BOOST 2022 FINALIST

REWILDING ACRES

Interview with Rozina Kanchwala of Rewilding Acres.

Could you briefly share a bit about your project/start-up? What you do and/or what problem you're trying to address?

Rewilding Acres is an ecosystem restoration project that will transform commercial farmland into an agrivoltaic site that combines solar power with ecosystem restoration and organic farming to regenerate soil, sequester carbon, enhance food access, and create an experiential classroom.



Current farming practices on the site, and largely across the U.S., are degrading the soil, leading to air and water pollution, putting power into the hands of agribusiness companies, and ultimately contributing to the climate crisis. We want to showcase a model that can turn conventional farmland into a climate solution, while generating income and serving as a place for the community to learn, heal, and feel connected to the natural world.

What plans/goals do you have on the horizon you're looking forward to?

Our first step is a site assessment, which will give us information about the drain tiles that run through the farm and indicate the feasibility of solar power generation and wetland restoration efforts. These site assessment is scheduled for November 2022.

In 2023, our goals will be to fundraise for things like seeds for our restoration efforts, build community partnerships and recruit volunteers who will engage with our replanting efforts, and ensure our contracts, stakeholders, and plans are in place so that we can actually begin in 2024.

How can people get involved or support your work?

We welcome any and all donations. A site assessment costs \$13,000 and seed costs are around \$2,000 per acre and we plan on rewilding around 5 acres in our first year. We are seeking 1-2 additional Advisory Council members so if you have expertise you can offer, get in touch! We would welcome media or social media expertise as well as a designer to help us create a logo. We want to create community partnerships so if you have ideas on partnerships or collaborations, please get in touch! If you have other ideas, we're open to them!

Learn more about Rewilding Acres by visiting ecologicprograms.org/landrestoration.

BOOST WINNER UPDATE

THE URBAN CANOPY (2013)

In 2013, the Urban Canopy won one of the BOOST grants awarded at Delta's second annual event. Let's check in to see how their business is going since winning the competition ten years ago as one of our earliest winning start-ups:

Hi Alex! For those who don't know, could you briefly share a bit about The Urban Canopy?

Founded in 2011, The Urban Canopy is pioneering the local food cycle to create a more sustainable and equitable food system in Chicago. We are growers, distributors, composters and community members who seek to positively impact our city's environment, people's health, and local economy. We strive to make healthy produce accessible to all, reduce the miles fresh food travels, keep food waste out of landfills, and create and maintain local jobs.

To achieve this, we structure our business into seven Branches: Compost Club, Indoor Farm, Outdoor Farm, Local Unified CSA (LUCSA), Farmers Markets, Distribution and Processing. These branches each work in their own way to change the way our food is grown, distributed, and wasted.

What plans/goals do you have on the horizon you're looking forward to?

Our Compost Club has just expanded into [Chicago's] southern suburbs! We are excited to announce that residents of Flossmoor, Homewood, Park Forest, Country Club Hills, Hazel Crest, Markham, Thornton, Glenwood, Chicago Heights, Ford Heights, Olympia Fields & Matteson can now sign up for residential and commercial composting services. Check out our website TheUrbanCanopy.org to see our new service map and sign up for service today.

How can people get involved or support your work?

Sign up for Compost Club and/or our LUCSA program! The best way to support our work is to participate in it directly. Our LUCSA program delivers local produce, meat, dairy and food products from our farm and trusted partner organizations right to your door. Our Locally Unified CSA model allows customers to directly fund the local food system of Chicago with predictable purchases that allow food producers to account for disruptions from pests, market changes and even pandemics while still providing delicious food to your home and family.

Similarly our compost Club members complete the cycle of nutrient capture by taking the scraps and spoiled foods left uneaten. Capturing those nutrients to be returned to our soils to start the process over again!

***We congratulate Alex and all those at The Urban Canopy on their success thus far!
Learn more by visiting TheUrbanCanopy.org.***

BOOST WINNER UPDATE

LILLIAN AUGUSTA (2019)

In 2019, Jannice Newson won a BOOST award for her start-up: Lillian Augusta. The start-up creates plant-based braiding that eliminates the discomfort associated with synthetic braiding hair and is 100% biodegradable. Lillian Augusta revolutionizes Black hair care by offering “hair without harm.”

Since winning BOOST, Lillian Augusta has been featured in *Blavity*, *Crains Detroit Business*, and *Essence* magazine. Right now, Jannice shares that her company’s most immediate plans include fine tuning the hair for focus group testing.

We congratulate Jannice and all those at Lillian Augusta on their success thus far!

Learn more about by visiting lillianaugustahair.com.



BOOST WINNER UPDATE

BLOCK BINS (2019)

In 2019, Dane Christianson won a BOOST award for his start-up: Block Bins. The start-up offers compost & recycling bins that you can request and share, creating affordable and sustainable recycling programs anywhere. Here's our recent interview with Dane:

Hi Dane! For those who don't know, could you briefly share a bit about your start-up?

Block Bins is Chicago's curbside compost program. Residents can drop off their organic waste at an existing Block Bin, or request a new one at their residence.

What plans/goals do you have on the horizon you're looking forward to?

We have grown significantly since BOOST and are continuing to expand. We are excited to be creating a brand new plastics recycling program to improve Chicago's recycling rates.

How can people get involved or support your work?

Start composting today by finding a Block Bin near you at blockbins.com. No bin? Request a new one and bring compost service to your block.

*We congratulate Dane and all those at Block Bins on their success thus far!
Learn more by visiting blockbins.com.*



BOOST WINNER UPDATE

ZUMWALT ACRES (2020)

In 2020, sisters Gavi & Remi Welbel won the BOOST grant for their work in developing a regenerative agriculture community in Sheldon, IL: Zumwalt Acres. Let's see how things are going!

Hi Gavi & Remi! Could you briefly share a bit about what Zumwalt Acres is?

Zumwalt Acres is a 6th generation farm in Sheldon, IL transitioning industrial farming into sustainable agriculture. We are implementing farming methods that revitalize soil, capture carbon, and produce nutritious food. Our farm is a hub of learning through our apprenticeship program, scientific research, and outreach to regional farmers and community members. Our research focuses on adding crushed rock to soil to reverse carbon emissions and enhance soil health. Our apprenticeship program trains young people who live on the farm in a community, rooted in Jewish learning and values. Apprentices learn scientifically-driven farming techniques from experienced mentors through hands-on work, and educational programming. Our mission is to foster a new generation of farmers, scientists, and activists to build a better food system and tackle climate change. Our work is grounded in environmental farming practices, scientific research, and community building, guided by Jewish values.

What plans/goals do you have on the horizon you're looking forward to?

We are finishing our second growing season at Zumwalt Acres! Thus far, we have hosted over 50 apprentices in total who have stewarded the land, engaged in community building and educational programming, and contributed to our innovative carbon sequestration research. In collaboration with conventional farmers in our local community, we have greatly expanded our field trials on the carbon capture potential of applying crushed basalt rock as a soil amendment. In total, we implemented over 400+ acres of field trials, becoming one of the largest sites in the world of this emergent strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Our horticulture crops and perennials are thriving! They are nourishing our community of apprentices and mentors, feeding 50+ people a week at our local food pantry, being distributed at our local farmers' market, and being sold through a regional regenerative farmer cooperative.

How can people get involved or support your work?

Folks are always welcome to apply to our seasonal apprenticeship program (generally geared towards 18-26 year olds) and are encouraged to reach out to find ways to meaningfully connect with, or join our growing community. We host community events that are publicized on social media (Instagram: [@zumwaltacres](https://www.instagram.com/zumwaltacres), Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ZumwaltAcres>). We also always welcome support for our work through the donation link on our website (below).

***We congratulate Gavi & Remi and all those at Zumwalt Acres on their success thus far!
Learn more by visiting [zumwaltacres.org](https://www.zumwaltacres.org).***

SPECIAL THANK YOU!

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In addition to this year's sponsors, we would like to thank the following supporters for joining us at this year's event as VIP supporters, as of October 25, 2022:

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WHO WE ARE

Our Mission.

Delta Institute works with communities throughout the Midwest to solve complex environmental challenges.

Our Vision

We address Midwestern environmental, economic, and climate challenges today, so that our home and region are more resilient, equitable, and innovative tomorrow.

Why We Exist

Delta exists because environmental, economic, and climate issues hit communities—urban and rural—through disinvestment, systemic inequity, and policy decisions. We collaborate at the community level to solve our home region's new and legacy issues, by focusing on the self-defined goals and needs of our partners.

Our work takes us to population centers like Chicago, St. Louis, and Detroit; to mid-sized cities such as Gary and South Bend, Indiana; to Great Lakes coastal towns like Michigan City, Indiana and Muskegon, Michigan; and to rural communities and watersheds with tens of thousands of acres of farmland and waterways across our region. It's quite likely that you—or someone you know—lives, works, or passes through a community that Delta has helped since our founding in 1998.

Acting now is not only a pressing climate change issue, but also an issue of equity and environmental justice.



Delta Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar, a recognition received by fewer than 1% of all nonprofits nationally.

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BOOST is organized by the Delta Emerging Leaders

The Delta Emerging Leaders (DELs) volunteer as the associate board of Delta Institute to create programming that engages emerging leaders to advance innovation and sustainability in Chicago. BOOST is a project of the DELs that supports Delta Institute and local entrepreneurs in sustainability.



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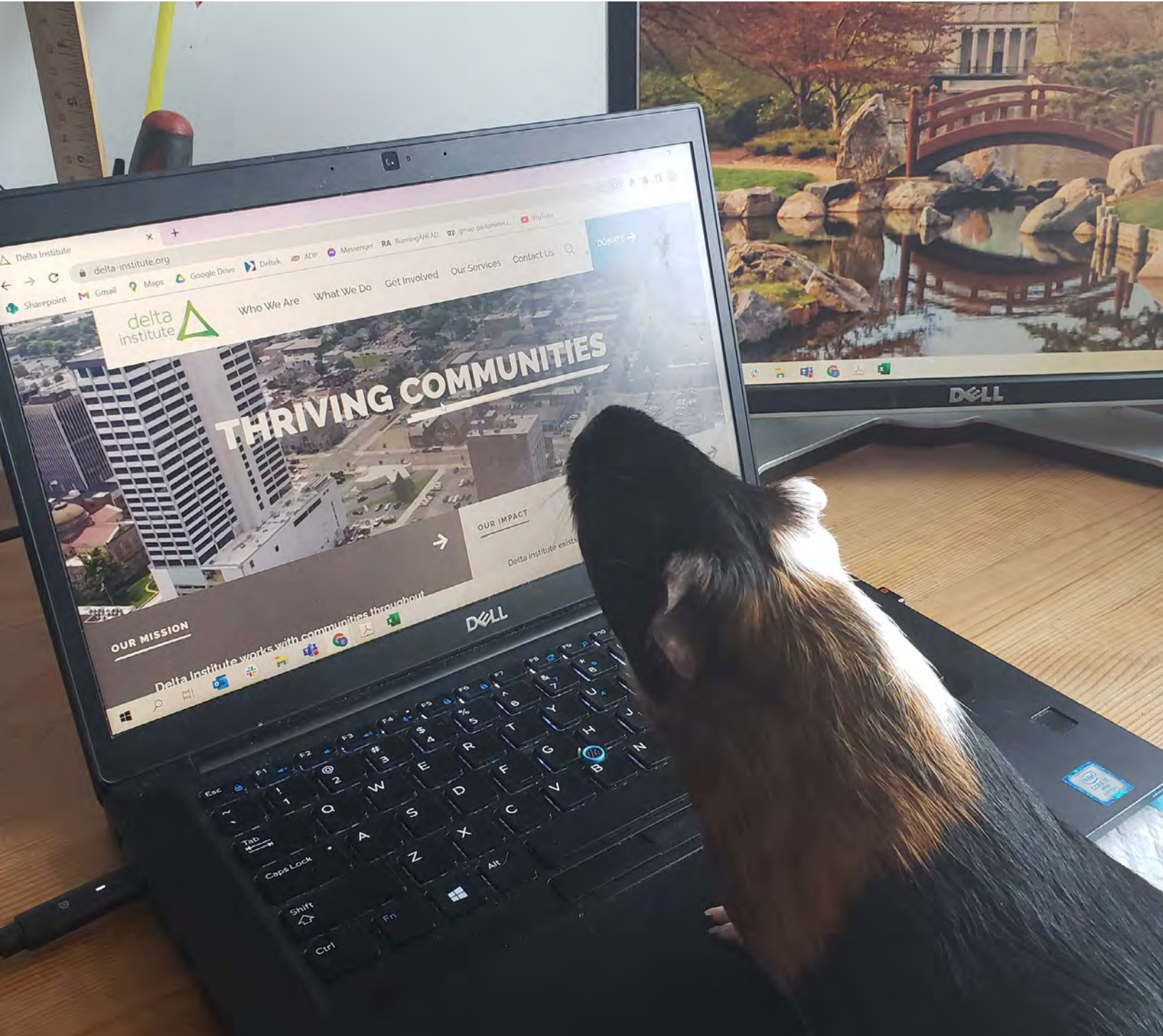
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for all Midwesterners.*

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