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OVER-THE-RHINE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS THREE INNOVATION GRANTS

Longtime OTR Restaurant, Training Program is Top Recipient

CINCINNATI- Three businesses in Cincinnati's celebrated Over-the-Rhine neighborhood have been awarded grants to help them expand their operations and fund creative new projects, the OTR Chamber of Commerce announced today. The three grants are a part of the Chamber's Business Attraction and Retention program, combine to represent an \$8,000 investment in helping to continue the innovative, creative spirit of the neighborhood known for its convergence of arts, community, culture, food and entrepreneurship.

Venice on Vine, an OTR restaurant that has been a fixture for decades and provides job skills and training programs, received a \$5,175 grant to help the restaurant and social enterprise remain relevant in a highly competitive industry. Specific projects funded by the grant will include menu adaptation and expansion, improved site design, and an expanded advertising and digital marketing program.

"The past several years has seen significant changes in OTR, including increased competition," said Greg Zoller, Director of Resource Development of Power Inspires Progress. "The OTR Chamber grant has helped provide the stimulus our organization needed to implement changes to ensure our social enterprise remains viable well into the future. Having the Chamber's support is a much-appreciated vote of confidence in our efforts."

Since Venice on Vine was launched, the organization has helped over 1,000 individuals gain work skills and permanent employment. For more information, visit: <http://pip-cincy.com>.

Other recipients of the grant include The Sarah Center and The Libby Shop.

The Sarah Center, which is part of the OTR-located St. Francis Seraph Ministries, received a \$2,225 grant to allow the organization to purchase software that will help expand their online retail operations. The Sarah Center provides classes in jewelry, quilting and sewing. The handmade pieces created in these courses are then sold at the center as a way for each participant to generate income for their creations.

The Libby Shop, an OTR retail destination for women's clothing with an in-house jewelry line, received a \$600 grant to fund in-store improvements and the purchase of signage to help the store attract new customers.

"This newest round of OTR Innovation Challenge Grants supports three diverse businesses and social enterprises which make our neighborhood special," said OTR Chamber Executive Director Kelly Adamson. "We're especially proud to support two organizations who have been in the community for decades, as well as one that is a newer addition to our evolving business district."

The Business Innovation Challenge, which began in 2014, awards OTR businesses and organizations seeking to expand their services and keep up with consumer trends. Past grantees include: MOTR Pub, Cincy Shirts, MORTAR, Lucca Laser Work + Shop and Findlay Kitchen.

The next round of applications for the Business Innovation Challenge are now available and grant applications are due September 7. More information and to download an application, visit: <http://www.otrchamber.com>

ABOUT THE OTR CHAMBER

The Over-the-Rhine Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1985, represents its members by promoting economic vitality, safety, business attraction and retention and fostering a socially and culturally diverse OTR community. The OTR Chamber also founded the nonprofit OTR Revitalization Corporation. Together, the two organizations work together to bring resources, events, commerce and awareness to the 360-acre neighborhood.

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