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Winners Announced in Fifth Annual Singing River Trail Launch Tank

FLORENCE, AL – North Alabama’s entrepreneurial momentum was on full display today at the fifth annual Singing River Trail Launch Tank competition, held at Singin’ River Live in Florence, Alabama. Following a morning of live pitches from local entrepreneurs, judges awarded shares of \$25,000 in non-dilutive funding among this year’s finalists, with the top three winners receiving the largest awards to help move their businesses forward.

Singing River Trail Launch Tank 2026 Winners

- **First Place (\$10,000): CastOff (Angr)** – Hayden Blakely and Sam Hathcock, Lauderdale County
- **Second Place (\$5,000): Gather & Grow Play Café** – Jordan Eastman, Limestone County
- **Third Place (\$2,500): The Walker Ranch** – James Walker, Lauderdale County

The other eight finalists received \$1,000 each: Smart Brick, SetaTech, The Cove: Center for Health & Hormones, ConectaCore, Valley Emergency Response Solutions, OptiLif, BayleeCo, and SkyFusion.

This year’s competition featured eleven finalists from across North Alabama, each presenting their business ideas before a live audience and a panel of expert judges. Finalists were evaluated on business viability, innovation, and potential regional impact.

Now in its fifth year, Singing River Trail Launch Tank continues to showcase the creativity and ambition of entrepreneurs across the region while connecting them with the visibility, resources, and support needed to grow.

“One of the most exciting parts of this event is seeing the connections that happen in the room,” said Andrew Dollar, who oversees operations for Singing River Trail Launch Tank. “The funding is meaningful, but so are the relationships, encouragement, and opportunities that come from being part of Singing River Trail Launch Tank. Each year, this competition strengthens the network of support around entrepreneurs in North Alabama, and that has lasting value for both these businesses and our region.”

Hosted by Launch Regional Partnership and Singing River Trail, the competition has become a key platform for identifying and supporting promising small businesses across North Alabama. As Singing River Trail Launch Tank marks its fifth year, organizers say the event’s continued growth reflects a larger story: one of a region investing in its people, ideas, and future.

“This year’s competition was our biggest and most competitive yet,” said Misti Potter, Executive Director of Singing River Trail. “The level of innovation we saw today reflects the incredible talent and determination that exists across North Alabama. As we celebrate this fifth-year milestone, it’s exciting to see how Singing River Trail Launch Tank continues to elevate entrepreneurs and support regionalism efforts in our area.”

The event drew a strong crowd from North Alabama’s business, civic, and entrepreneurial communities. With tickets sold out, attendees gathered to cheer on finalists and celebrate the region’s growing culture of entrepreneurship and collaboration.

About Launch Regional Partnership: Launch Regional Partnership is a 501(c)(3) non-profit working to strengthen the North Alabama region through entrepreneurship, land use, and workforce initiatives. Created in 2014, the non-profit is united by the belief that our region's prosperity depends on North Alabama counties working and planning together, committed to fostering regional economic growth and an enviable quality of life for all our residents.

About Singing River Trail: Established in 2018, Singing River Trail is a 200+ mile greenway system that strengthens regional bonds and creates new health and wellness, educational, economic, tourism, and entrepreneurial opportunities for the people and communities in the Tennessee Valley region.

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