

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **Debtle, Pure and Complete Phonics win NEW Launch Alliance HATCH Event** *Winning solutions help tackle consumer debt crisis, dyslexia through game application*

NEW NORTH, December 7, 2020 – Debtle of Kohler and Pure and Complete Phonics LLC of Oshkosh were judged as the winners at the NEW Launch Alliance HATCH Event, held virtually on Dec. 3. They emerged from six competitors who earlier had qualified by winning local pitch events during Startup Week in Wisconsin to earn prize money.

The two winners will be invited to pitch again at the New North Summit in 2021 to receive broader investor attention. Last year's Summit winners also will provide an update on the status of their company launches.

"The judges and I were impressed by the strength of the entrepreneurial ideas put forth by our six competitors," says Barb LaMue, president and CEO of event-sponsor New North Inc. "It reinforced the strength of the startup community in our region. We congratulate Debtle and Pure and Complete Phonics on standing out above the rest."

Winning the pitch competition, including prize money of \$3,000, was Debtle, presented by co-founder Stephanie Hoskins. Debtle is tackling the consumer debt crisis by helping companies and their customers negotiate and settle overdue invoices through a cloud-based platform, scalable to any size business, that automates, improves and simplifies the negotiation of bad debt accounts.

The idea for Debtle originated several years ago when, while working in healthcare finance, Hoskins saw inefficiency and breakdowns, and that no one had a quality solution. With research, she found that those issues were widespread, extending across multiple industries, and that this is a problem for 93 percent of U.S. companies. According to Hoskins, 30 million Americans have at least one bad debt account on their credit report and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the amount of bad debt.

Debtle has found early success with pilot sites for both businesses and individuals. It plans to use the prize money from the New North pitch competition to wrap up its pilots and launch the product into the marketplace over the next three months. Hoskins says the long-term goal for the startup she founded with her husband, Houston, is that, any time someone has a debt and wants to settle, they think of Debtle as the solution.

"Debtle is so honored to be recognized by New North," says Stephanie Hoskins. "We are grateful for the robust entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northeast Wisconsin that has been instrumental in driving our startup forward."

Debtle earlier had taken first place at the Nov. 18 competition for Sheboygan and Manitowoc Counties.

Finishing second in the pitch competition and receiving a prize of \$2,000 was Pure and Complete Phonics LLC, presented Dr. Shawn A. Robinson (aka "Doctor Dyslexia Dude"). The startup is developing an engaging, game-based spelling and reading application for students in grades 4-8 with dyslexia that is authentic, realistic and culturally responsive.

Dr. Robinson has been personally affected by dyslexia. Having grown up in Illinois, he was officially diagnosed with dyslexia going into his senior year of high school by Dr. Robert T. Nash. Robinson graduated high school

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reading at an elementary level and started the Project Success summer program in 1996. With the help of Project Success, along with Dr. Nash, Dr. William Kitz and Michael Flanagan at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, Robinson learned to read. He went on to receive bachelor's, master's and doctorate degrees. "I was a lost kid, and after overcoming my struggles with dyslexia I was liberated."

Now wanting to give back by helping others with dyslexia, Dr. Robinson continues development of his game designed for students with the learning disorder. The prototype with limited functionality has received positive feedback, he says, and his goal is to take the game to the next level to reach as many kids as possible, both nationally and internationally.

"Pure and Complete Phonics LLC is grateful to have competed in the NEW Launch Alliance HATCH pitch competition," says Robinson. "The Doctor Dyslexia Dude team is honored to be recognized and afforded the opportunity to share our dream. We are excited to use this platform to highlight the importance of inclusion, increasing cultural perspectives on dyslexia and the importance of meeting kids at the intersection of learning and technology with our digital platform."

Pure and Complete Phonics had won the Nov. 17 pitch event for Outagamie, Winnebago and Fond du Lac Counties.

There were 21 entrepreneurial pitches made at the local qualifying events in mid-November. Each local competition produced two winners, for a total of six presenters during last week's NEW Launch Alliance HATCH Event.

Beyond Deble and Pure and Complete Phonics, the other four competitors, listed in alphabetical order, were: Experienced Associates LLC, presented by Chad Hendricks; Lovin The Skin I'm In, presented by Rhonda Chandler; Sheboatin' Manufacturing, presented by Justin Vannieuwenhoven; and Tempo, presented by Alex Hunt.

The competition's seven judges, coordinated by UW-Green Bay entrepreneurship lecturer Ryan Kauth, were: Irene Strohbeen, entrepreneur in residence at Lawrence University; Jerry Lintz of Northeast Wisconsin Technical College; Tricia Ascher, award-winning entrepreneur and president of Ascher's Janitorial; Shashank Varma, innovation accelerator founder/manager at Kohler Co. and principal at WorkFrame Consulting; Aslinn Merriman, emerging technology architect at Sargento Foods; Inga Arendt, partner at Wipfli LLP; and Andrew Schmitz, co-founder of Proceed.app and a winner at the 2019 New North HATCH Regional Final pitch event.

Partner organizations which supported the competitions included the Startup Hub of the Greater Green Bay Chamber; the Door County Economic Development Corporation; Envision Greater Fond du Lac; Progress Lakeshore and Biz Starts; inVenture North; the Venture Center at Fox Valley Technical College; the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce; the Sheboygan County Economic Development Corp.; Small Business Development Centers of UW-Green Bay and UW Oshkosh; and the Austin E. Cofrin School of Business at UW-Green Bay.

Sponsorship was provided by New North Inc., the BrightStar Wisconsin Foundation and Wisconsin Business Development (WBD).

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New North, Inc., is a 501(c)3 non-profit, regional economic development corporation fostering collaboration among private and public sector leaders throughout the 18 counties of Northeast Wisconsin, known as the New North region. The New North brand unites the region both internally and externally around talent development, brand promotion and business development, signifying the collective economic power behind the 18 counties. The counties include Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet, Waupaca, Brown, Shawano, Oconto, Marinette, Door, Kewaunee, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Marquette, Florence, Menominee and Waushara.

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