

# PRESS RELEASE



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## Fall 2023 Entrepreneur Grant Winners Awarded by Wilkes EDC

**North Wilkesboro, N.C.** — Ten local businesses received Entrepreneur Grants from the Wilkes Economic Development Corporation (EDC) at the EDC's Board Meeting on Friday, December 8, 2023. This grant program is held twice a year thanks to EDC's private/public investors and the sponsorship of the [Small Business Center](#) (SBC) at Wilkes Community College. Twenty local businesses of various types applied for this year's program, representing several industry sectors: services, hospitality, agriculture, legal, and childcare.

Submissions were judged based on the potential funding impact on the business and the sustainability of each respective recipient. Applicants submitted a video pitch in addition to their business plans and financial summaries to give the judges an insight into their proposed use of funds. The grant amount totaled \$14,000, distributed between the ten winners.

Bliss Hair & Nail Salon is owned and operated by Valery Guevara. They have been operating for seven years, where this year, they relocated to their newly owned building at 314 10th Street, North Wilkesboro. Their services include personal care for hair, nails, makeup, and esthetics. Valery expresses that her team enjoys making their clients feel and look beautiful and improving their day by stopping by the salon. Bliss Hair & Nail Salon received \$2,200 for a double-sided station and two chairs, enabling the business to grow their team. To learn more or to book an appointment, visit their [Facebook](#) page today!

Blue Mountain Flowers, operated by Mikayla and Steven Calloway, is a new business located in Ronda that locally grows and cuts flowers for floral experiences offered to customers, businesses, and events. They recently included a bouquet subscription service that they will continue to expand in 2024, and they plan to hold more pop-ups and floral classes. Blue Mountain Flowers received \$1,000 for ground cover and irrigation to produce the highest quality cut flowers. Learn more by visiting [BlueMtnFlowers.com](#).

Blue Ridge Reflexology is a new business operated by Nicole Wagoner at 807 B Street, North Wilkesboro. Her service addresses a whole-body approach to wellness using micro-movement techniques to facilitate the client in relaxation and healing. Blue Ridge Reflexology received \$1,500 towards an Ion Cleanse detox system to expand their reflexology services. To learn more or to book an appointment, visit [BlueRidgeReflexology.com](#).

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Buttercups Ice Cream and Beverages is a mobile premium ice cream business. Monica Bolick is the owner, and she and her family members operate the business. Their products are high quality and presented in an appealing manner that makes them ideal for special events and occasions such as community events, birthday parties, weddings, and more. Buttercups Ice Cream and Beverages received \$1,500 toward a trailer/pushcart to expand the catering side of their business. Follow their [Facebook](#) page to stay up-to-date on events and locations.

Crooked Creek Highlands is a new business owned and operated by Megan and Evan White. They specialize in Scottish Highland Cattle breeding, agri-tourism events, a venue for professional photography, and more. To enhance its customer experience, Crooked Creek Highlands will use its \$2,000 grant towards a farm store to showcase merchandise. This addition would also help organize their inventory, adding to the agri-tourism, event, and cattle-purchasing experience. To learn more or to schedule a tour, visit [CrookedCreekHighlands.com](#).

Extreme Spirit Allstarz Cheer, Dance, & Tumble, owned and operated by April Holleman, is a cheer and dance gym at 308 Cothren St, Wilkesboro. They offer classes for competitive cheerleading, competitive dance, recreational tumbling, special needs competitive cheerleading, summer camps, and more. Their business started in 2012 and has grown from 22 kids to over 140 with 21 competitive teams. They received \$1,000 dedicated to installing new flooring to help expand their facility space, increasing class availability for new participants. To learn more, visit [ESACheer.com](#).

Growing Faith Farms & Retreat is a new business in Moravian Falls, NC, founded and operated by Christina and Joseph Angott. They offer cut flowers, herbs, tea, and seeding in the high country of North Carolina. On-farm experience includes you-picks, small events, and on-site farm stays in glamping tents. They received \$1,000 towards informational signage to aid in the arrival of visitors. To learn more or to book your getaway, visit [GrowingFaithFarms.com](#).

High Country Estate Law is a new business operating at The Masthead. Victoria A. Brooks owns this firm and helps individuals and families plan their future, protect their loved ones, and guide them through estate and probate administration processes. They received \$800 for a printer to help manage client's paperwork needs. To learn more or to book a consultation, visit [HighCountryEstateLaw.com](#).

Hometown Collaborative is owned and operated by Erica March and Holly Piotrowski. The business is located at 903 Main St, North Wilkesboro, and has been operating for the last three years. They showcase local artisans' craftsmanship and offer locally crafted items, including jewelry, an assortment of teas and accessories, unique gifts, budget-friendly women's clothing, and more. They received \$1,000 towards displays to allow more vendor showcases in their store. They will continue working with the Small Business Center for a marketing grant toward filming a commercial with Jared C. Shumate Media & Marketing. Learn more about their shop by visiting [HomeTownCollaborative.com](#).

MeMe's Little Learners Family Childcare is a new in-home childcare provider. Care is provided to preschool children through a nurturing and safe environment. Melissa Allen, the owner, has completed her associate degree in early childhood development from Wilkes Community College, training through Wilkes Partnership for Children, and several required certifications to become licensed. She is working on her last semester of classes to complete her bachelor's in early childhood education, which is a necessary step to becoming a licensed childcare provider. Being licensed will give Melissa more childcare spots for MeMe's Little Learners Family Childcare. Melissa received \$2,000 for learning materials for her childcare space. To learn more, email Melissa at [AllenMissy333@hotmail.com](mailto:AllenMissy333@hotmail.com).

Wilkes EDC President LeeAnn Nixon thanked this cycle's judges. "Their commitment to the program is greatly appreciated. Local business advocates from North Wilkesboro and Wilkesboro, as well as regional organizations that provide support for entrepreneurial endeavors, are members of the judging panel. Applicants frequently can find referrals and guidance that they were unaware of, thanks to their experience and information." The Fall 2023 judges were Thomas Salley of Wilkesboro Tourism Development, Taylor Gann of The Town of North Wilkesboro, Lesa Hensley of First Community Bank, Doren Tripp of The Masthead, and David Henson of Small Business Technology Development Center. We give a special thanks to Laurie Brintle-Jarvis of the Wilkes Community College Small Business Center for continuing to help applicants with their Business Plans and Financial Summaries during the grant cycle, and we thank the SBC for being a sponsor of the Fall 2023 Entrepreneur Grant Program. Laurie establishes relationships with businesses to ensure their success by providing free and confidential business coaching services to small business owners in Wilkes, Ashe, and Allegheny counties. Contact her office or visit the [Small Business Center's website for information and more resources](#).

Francisco Martinez, Marketing Manager for Wilkes EDC, said, "We were just a few shy of receiving the most applications this program has received. Entrepreneurship is strong in Wilkes County, and the support for these businesses is growing. The program offers more than an opportunity to receive grants; it also provides an opportunity to engage with resources and discover additional avenues. It would be wonderful to see the financial backing of this program grow so that local businesses may receive more funding in the future. Contact us today to become an active sponsor and support Wilkes' entrepreneurship through this program."

Robin Hamby, Vice President of Wilkes EDC, has led this grant program since 2015. "We value the financial support of this program from generous sponsors. For the benefit of new and existing businesses alike, it is essential that this program be offered twice yearly. We are pleased to provide this grant opportunity every six months." The future of this program relies on sponsorships to encourage entrepreneurship. Wilkes EDC hopes to continue holding it twice yearly in the Spring and Fall. Wilkes Community College Small Business Center and Wilkes EDC were the Fall 2023 program sponsors. We are accepting funding commitments for the Spring 2024 Entrepreneur Grant Program with our ongoing goal of exceeding funding amounts from previous rounds, which was \$14,000 for the Fall 2023 program.

Program Sponsorships are available at various levels, with private and in-kind donations also accepted. Each level above Bronze allows the donor to be recognized even further. All our program sponsors receive free promotional marketing on the [Entrepreneur Grant webpage](#), an announcement in the EDC's Monthly Activity Report, and are honored guests at our Annual Meeting. If you are interested in supporting entrepreneurship and economic development in Wilkes County, don't hesitate to contact our office at (336) 838-150 for more information.

## **ABOUT**

The **Wilkes Economic Development Corporation**, a 501c3 public-private partnership, aims to facilitate the creation of new jobs and capital investment in Wilkes County through the retention and expansion of existing businesses and the recruitment of new businesses. The EDC is located at 213 Ninth Street in historic downtown North Wilkesboro, North Carolina. For more information about Wilkes EDC, visit [www.WilkesEDC.com](http://www.WilkesEDC.com) or contact LeeAnn Nixon at 336-838-1501 or [lnixon@wilkesedc.com](mailto:lnixon@wilkesedc.com).

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