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NFIB Awards Top Young Entrepreneurs of 2017

100 High School Seniors Win College Scholarships for Starting Small Businesses

Washington, D.C. (April 26, 2017) — The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) Young Entrepreneur Foundation today announced 100 scholarship winners for its 15th annual [NFIB Young Entrepreneur Awards](#), a scholarship program designed to reward and encourage entrepreneurial talents among high school students who own and operate their own small business.

“These young, creative and ambitious students saw a need or want in the marketplace and followed their entrepreneurial instincts to turn their visions into successful small businesses,” said **Molly Young, Director of the Young Entrepreneur Foundation**. “NFIB is proud to award the next generation of business owners with these scholarships for their hard work and innovative accomplishments, and we encourage them to continue to follow their entrepreneurial dreams.”

Thanks to Visa Inc. and other small business supporters, 95 high school seniors were today named Young Entrepreneur Award winners and will receive \$2,000 scholarships.

Five additional students were named finalists for NFIB’s top two scholarships: the 2017 NFIB Young Entrepreneur of the Year and the 2017 NFIB Dan Danner Leadership Award. These five finalists will be honored at an event in Washington, D.C. on July 27, where the winners for both awards will be announced.

The winners of the 2017 NFIB Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award and the 2017 NFIB Dan Danner Leadership Award will each receive a \$15,000 scholarship. The remaining three finalists will each receive a \$5,000 scholarship.

This year’s finalists are:

Sophie Eubanks, Raleigh, North Carolina, is the co-founder of the PinkyGirl, a web based monogrammed apparel company. Sophie and her sister have grown the business from a basement hobby, monogramming items for their friends, to an international company with a facility and full time employee. PinkyGirl also donates a percentage of all sales to Susan G Komen and developed a line of "CURE" themed clothing, which is donated to cancer patients.

Zane Hehnke, Winterest, Iowa, is the owner and operator of Inspired Finds, an accents and interiors company specializing in the design and creation of unique furniture. Most pieces are sold after being made into original works through repurposing vintage and antique items. The creativity usually comes after acquiring vintage artifacts at auctions, swap meets, or salvage yards. Inspired finds has been featured in print and broadcast news ten times.

Paul Kaster, Leawood, Kansas, is the founder and owner of Crooked Branch Studio, which specializes in wooden accessories and home goods. Paul’s flagship products, wooden bow ties,

launched in the fall of 2015 after a successful Kickstarter campaign. In one year Paul hired four employees and grew the business from a small, one-man operation to shipping over a thousand wooden bow ties to 16 countries, 45 states, and 8 retail stores.

Sharon Lin, Corona, New York, is the founder and CEO of Codeco, a software development and consulting company that works primarily with youth-oriented startups and businesses, as well as pro bono with non-profit organizations in developing websites and mobile applications. In addition, Sharon's company works with media-based companies on social media strategy and increasing outreach and marketing viability through grassroots and user-based interactions.

Ellen Schlechter, Orient, South Dakota, is the developer and co-owner of The Calving Book App, LLC, an agriculture-related mobile application designed to keep calf records all in one place and allow farmers to easily share cattle records. Two years after the launch, Ellen introduced an advanced version of the app that could work offline with more features. Since then, Ellen has been featured in numerous agriculture publications and on local radio and TV.

To qualify for an NFIB Young Entrepreneur Award, students must be seniors in high school who own and operate their own small business. They are required to write an essay describing their entrepreneurial endeavors and future goals. NFIB members around the country interview the applicants for the Young Entrepreneur Awards.

For more information and a full list of this year's winners, please visit www.nfib.com/2017yea

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The NFIB Young Entrepreneur Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization promoting the importance of small business and free enterprise to the nation's youth. More information is available at www.NFIB.com/2016YEF. The Foundation is associated with the National Federation of Independent Business; NFIB is the nation's leading small business advocacy association, with offices in Washington, D.C. and all 50 state capitals. Founded in 1943 as a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, NFIB gives small- and independent-business owners a voice in shaping the public policy issues that affect their business. NFIB's powerful network of grassroots activists send their views directly to state and federal lawmakers through our unique member-only ballot, thus playing a critical role in supporting America's free enterprise system.