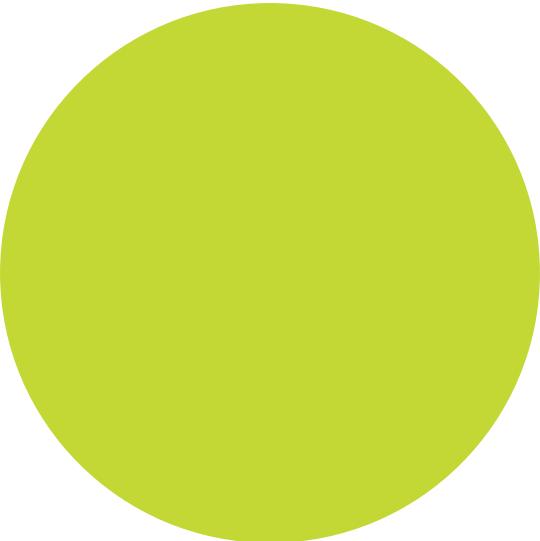




COMMUNITY INVESTMENT
COLLABORATIVE



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

empowering small business for big change

Charlottesville | Culpeper | South Boston | Danville | Martinsville

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

For 13 years, Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) has empowered entrepreneurs to build pathways to prosperity. We've deployed over \$5 million in capital, guided 600 entrepreneurs through our programs, supported another 2,500 through our Central Virginia Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and connected hundreds to vital resources across our region.

Despite today's funding uncertainties, our commitment to entrepreneurs remains unwavering. We're focused on expanding opportunities for those historically excluded from business resources — including BIPOC individuals, women, and returning citizens — while working toward more equitable systems for all. This reflects our core belief that no entrepreneur should walk alone, and every path to success should be limited only by effort and adaptability, not starting point.

Our goals are ambitious: lend another \$6 million and serve 2,500 entrepreneurs in the next 3 years. We cannot make these strides alone. Together, we can build a community where every determined entrepreneur with a viable idea can thrive.

The 2024 Annual Report showcases our work and the entrepreneurs who make it meaningful. We hope their stories inspire your continued support as we build prosperity together.



STEPHEN DAVIS

President

CIC + CENTRAL VA SBDC TEAMS



TEIRA E. FARLEY
Chief Operating Officer
CIC



CAROLINA MEDINA
Chief Lending Officer
CIC



JOSHUA RENÉ
Director of People Strategy
CIC



JUANA DENT
Entrepreneurial Impact Manager
CIC



YVONNIA BRYANT
Development & Communications
Coordinator, CIC



SARAH GIBBONS
Operations Coordinator
CIC



TAYLOR McGRAW
Loan Portfolio Manager
CIC



LAURA COLEMAN
Entrepreneurial Impact Manager
CIC



DA'SHANNA CARR
Loan Officer
CIC



FRITZ AMSPACHER
RISE Community Business
Navigator, CIC



CHRISTINE CALDWELL
Entrepreneurial Impact Manager
CIC



TERRY WOODWORTH
Rural Ecosystem Builder
CIC



JESSICA THOMPSON
Rural Ecosystem Navigator
CIC



BO GRIST
Director
Central VA SBDC



ARIEL VAUGHAN
Assistant Director
Central VA SBDC



ROSI BEACHY
Assistant Director
Central VA SBDC



MESA MCMURTREY
Client & Operations Manager
Central VA SBDC



DAN FELLOWS
Business Advisor
Central VA SBDC



MAEVE SUMMERS
Communications & Events Coordinator
Central VA SBDC

PROGRAMS IN NUMBERS

Includes 16-week Entrepreneur Workshop, Mentoring, Financial Management Program, Small Business Circles, and Office Hours.

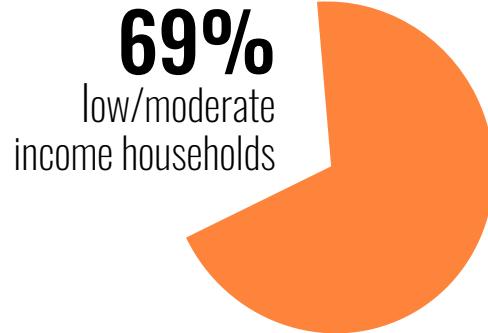
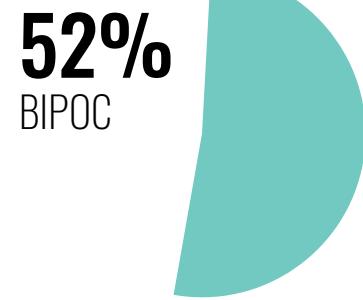
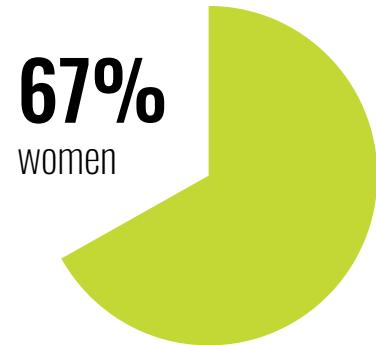
71 workshop students
graduated

47 full-time equivalent
jobs created

16 businesses
launched

241 businesses
supported

IN 2024



LIFETIME

185 businesses launched,
140 currently operating

416 full-time jobs created,
347 currently exist

459 businesses supported,
employing 898 people

FINANCING IN NUMBERS

Includes microloans and business grants.

31 loans for
\$1,050,855

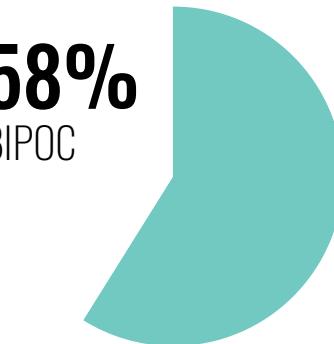
123 borrowers with
outstanding loans

26 grants to
businesses

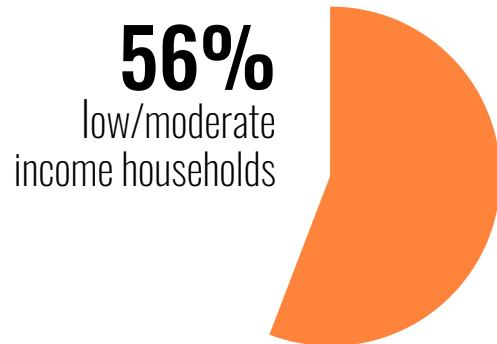
59%
women



58%
BIPOC



56%
low/moderate
income households



IN 2024

\$5.07m in
microloans

\$52.93m in wages from
jobs created

\$7.35 return on investment for
every CIC dollar spent

LIFETIME

CENTRAL VA SBDC IN NUMBERS

Central VA SBDC offers 1:1 business advising.

|N 2024

825 advising clients

3,264 advising hours

\$21.43m in capital formed

59%
women



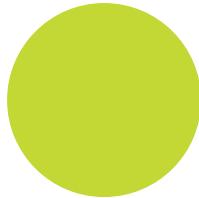
37%
BIPOC



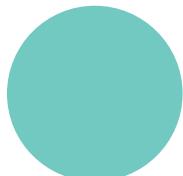
660 businesses supported

22 businesses started

123 jobs created in 2023



ENTREPRENEUR stories



Daryl Rivera
facebook.com/GetItWhileItzHot



AUTHENTIC LATIN AMERICAN SOUL FOOD

Authentic Latin American Soul Food serves made-from-scratch, flavorful dishes inspired by traditional family recipes.

Growing up in a household where Puerto Rican spices mingled with soul food aromas, Daryl learned early that food was more than sustenance — it was family, culture, and opportunity. As the oldest sibling in a household where both parents worked double shifts, he took on the role of family cook, learning through trial and error and, as he humorously put it, “burning a lot of food along the way.”

For over two decades, Daryl worked in restaurant kitchens, from Outback to Red Lobster, while dreaming of something more. “I always felt like I was meant for more than just being a line cook,” he mentioned. His goal was to own a food trailer. This was a dream he had held onto for more than a decade, but life had other plans first.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Daryl was laid off so he seized the opportunity to take some online classes, and also pursue barbering, a skill he honed over the years by cutting

hair for friends and family. This all led to him opening Legacy Cuts, a barbershop in Fork Union, Virginia.

While he gained success with Legacy Cuts, his food trailer dream never faded. He first tried his hand at owning a restaurant. He spent nearly a year renovating a restaurant space near his barbershop, only to walk away when the landlord failed to fix septic issues. Undeterred, Daryl turned back to his original vision of a food trailer.

His culinary inspiration came from his grandparents' kitchen, where he experienced what he still considers to be the best food he's ever tasted. “To this day, I haven't been able to fully recreate their dishes. Even with the exact measurements, it's just not the same,” he reflects. His grandparents cooked purely by instinct, never measuring ingredients, creating dishes that set a standard he strives to meet.

Daryl wanted to make sure this food trailer idea took off, so he sought the business guidance of the Fluvanna Economic



Development office, where he was introduced to the Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) [Entrepreneur Workshop](#). “I had the skills to cut hair and cook, but I knew nothing about running a business,” he admits.

The 16-week workshop proved to be transformative. Daryl worked closely with a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) advisor, Dan, to craft a realistic business plan. When CIC approved him for a \$30,000 loan, it was a “game-changer,” enabling him to purchase a fully equipped food trailer and launch Authentic Latin American Soul Food in October 2024. “This loan changed my life,” Rivera says. “It came through at the perfect time when I was more focused and driven than ever.”

Beyond the financial support, Daryl has also benefited from the CIC [Financial Management Program \(FMP\)](#). “FMP has been instrumental in helping me stay on track with both short-term and long-term goals necessary for the business’s success,” he shares. “It provided structure to the financial side of the business. My coach, Hannah Deal, has been fantastic, offering clear guidance on the steps needed to achieve the positive projections in my P&L spreadsheet.” Grateful for the support, Daryl added, “I truly appreciate everything CIC has done and continues to do.”

Looking ahead, Daryl envisions expanding to a brick-and-mortar location and adding another food truck focused on desserts. He hopes either option could provide summer jobs and entrepreneurship learning experiences for his kids. Today, Daryl balances both businesses working “eight days a week, 25 hours a day,” he jokes. His food trailer, usually stationed at Wholesale Tire Company in Fork Union, serves classic American cookout fare like burgers and steak-and-cheese sandwiches. His catering service showcases his Latin heritage with dishes like arroz con gandules (rice and pigeon peas), pernil (roasted pork), and soul food staples like collard greens and macaroni and cheese. For aspiring

“

THIS LOAN CHANGED MY LIFE

It came through at the perfect time when I was more focused and driven than ever.”



entrepreneurs, Rivera's advice is simple, yet powerful: “Figure out what you love to do — and go full force. You can't have doubts...just start somewhere. And as Nike says, 'Just do it.'”

Daryl's journey from family cook to business owner shows what's possible when passion meets opportunity. With CIC's support, he turned years of experience and determination into a thriving business. But for him, it's about more than just food — it's about creating something lasting. Whether behind the grill or the barber's chair, he's building a future that reflects his roots, his hard work, and his vision for what comes next.



A circular portrait of a woman with short, curly, grey hair, smiling. She is wearing a bright pink blazer over a black and white patterned top. The portrait is set against a white background.

Nicole Hawker

heartsoulfitness.org

HEART AND SOUL FITNESS WITH NICOLE

Heart and Soul Fitness is a Charlottesville-based organization dedicated to making wellness accessible through inclusive fitness programs and education while fostering a healthier, more vibrant community.

In early 2022 after nearly two decades as a social worker, Nicole Hawker found herself at a crossroads. Despite her dedication to helping others through foster care and adoption services, she was experiencing burnout. It took her daughter, Selena, to point out what Nicole couldn't see. Selena suggested it was time to do something different — something she would enjoy.

Nicole knew firsthand how transformative fitness could be. In 2012, she was a stay-at-home mom and foster parent in Tennessee, always prioritizing others' needs above her own. A friend's invitation to the gym sparked a love for fitness that changed her life. She eventually became a CrossFit coach who was eager to help other stay-at-home moms discover the same benefits. Over time, she realized that fitness was about more than just physical health — it had the power to impact lives profoundly.

After moving back home to Charlottesville in 2017, Nicole applied to the Community Investment Collaborative's (CIC) [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) with the idea to start a personal training business. Admission into the workshop provided her with critical business fundamentals, a network of supportive entrepreneurs, and direct access to resources that helped shape her vision.

In 2022, Nicole revisited her CIC notes and realized how valuable those lessons were. "CIC really helped me understand what it takes to start a business," Nicole reflects. "Even years later, I was able to go back to what I learned and apply it when I was finally ready to launch. The connections I made through CIC gave me the confidence to take that next step."

With CIC's foundational support in business development and a continued passion for service dating back to her time as a social worker, Nicole was inspired to launch Heart and Soul Fitness as a nonprofit. Nicole recognized a unique gap in the Charlottesville fitness market and wanted to offer a



space where wellness was accessible to those who needed it most.

Traditional gym memberships, often exceeding \$100 monthly, were out of reach for many in the Charlottesville community. Her gym was going to be affordable, and it was going to break down barriers for women in fitness, especially around weightlifting.

The impact has been remarkable. Starting with just one dedicated member, Heart and Soul Fitness has grown to serve 64 active members in just two years. The gym offers a variety of functional fitness classes, including running,

rowing, and weightlifting, all designed to challenge members while ensuring they feel supported and included. "I want every woman to know: you belong here," Nicole emphasizes. "There's a common fear that weightlifting will make women 'bulky' or that they won't be able to keep up. That's not true. Strength training is one of the best things women can do for their health."

Her commitment to the Charlottesville community has not gone unnoticed. In 2023, Nicole received the inaugural Women of Excellence award presented by the Business Women's Roundtable (BWRT) affinity group of the Charlottesville Chamber of Commerce. Heart and Soul Fitness was also voted Best Functional Fitness Gym by Best of Cville in 2024. While those achievements were great for Heart and Soul Fitness, Nicole was more excited about the transformations she saw in her members. She recalls hosting Heart and Soul's first 5K training last summer. As two dozen women crossed the finish line at the Women's Four Miler (over half of them completing a race for the first time), Nicole saw the true purpose of her business come to life. One member who had never run before finished with tears of joy in her eyes saying, "I never thought I could do this."

“

**CIC REALLY HELPED ME UNDERSTAND
WHAT IT TAKES TO START A BUSINESS. , ,**



Nicole envisions the future of Heart and Soul Fitness growing beyond its current space and bringing on additional coaches and trainers.

She dreams of fostering partnerships with other local fitness facilities to create comprehensive wellness challenges that address not just physical health, but also emotional and mental well-being too.

For aspiring entrepreneurs, Nicole's advice is simple: "Just start. You don't have to have it all figured out. You don't have to wait until everything is perfect. You can start small – take baby steps, test your idea, and learn as you go."

Heart and Soul Fitness shows what's possible when business meets purpose. It's more than a gym – it's proof that when we make wellness accessible to all, entire communities can transform...one lift, one run, one person at a time.

A circular portrait of a man with dark hair, a mustache, and a goatee, wearing black-rimmed glasses and a dark plaid shirt. He is smiling. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with a building and trees.

Chris Tobey

tobeymedia.com

TOBEY MEDIA

Tobey Media is a Charlottesville-based video production company that brings stories to life through powerful visual storytelling.

Grounded in a belief in the power of storytelling, Chris Tobey is the proud owner of Tobey Media, a local video production company in Charlottesville, Virginia. Chris began his journey three years ago working with both the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) and Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) to pursue his passion for telling meaningful narratives. Throughout his time as an Army Reservist, independent producer, and business owner, Chris has used the power of visual artistry to connect his clients to their consumer base in the most intimate and effective medium.

Despite his lifelong interest in media, videography always took a secondary role in Chris' past jobs. During the pandemic, Chris took a leap of faith, started freelance filming, and Tobey Media was born. He recognized the stories he cared about the most needed to be told from start

to finish. After a year of slow-growing his business, he was introduced to CIC through the Central Virginia SBDC. "My advisor at the time said that I would benefit from doing the CIC 16-week course, so I looked into it and applied," Chris told us.

During the CIC [Entrepreneur Workshop](#), Chris honed his ability to pitch and manage his business. He believes that CIC played a large role in helping him attract new investors and clients. "I've known about the concept of the elevator pitch, but I never really thought about doing one for a business. It helped me talk about my business better and have a clearer vision for what the business was," he said. After pitching at the TomTom Festival and the CIC Crowdfunded Pitch Night, Tobey Media honed into a mission-driven business ready to help the Charlottesville community.

Since Chris graduated from the workshop, Tobey Media has worked with CIC to better his business and our mission. Chris is a pioneer user of the CIC Collaborative, the shared office space offered to CIC graduates at little-to-no cost.



Chris explains, “Elsewhere you get distracted by all these things, but at the CIC [Collaborative](#), everybody is focusing on work. You meet other people who are building their businesses. There’s a little bit of bouncing ideas off of each other. I think when you’re surrounded by other people whose focus is work, it creates that atmosphere that helps you to be a little more intentional.”

On top of that, Chris secured \$20,000 through the CIC [Microloan Program](#) to fund an expansion of his video equipment. “I got a three-camera remote-operated system that has the capability of shooting in 4K and can switch between camera angles and control the cameras from one

location. It really does make the recording look like a studio talk show,” he explains. Chris has used his new equipment to strengthen his business and give back to the CIC community. Last December, Chris filmed CIC’s first commercial which has been seen all across Virginia. During production, he spent time with current workshop participants to share how learning from fellow entrepreneurs has impacted their lives and businesses. Chris described the experience as an opportunity to pay forward all the good that CIC has done for him.

Chris envisions eventually opening a brick-and-mortar studio and hiring collaborators while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. The flexible hours of entrepreneurship have given him the opportunity to bond with his kids while continuing to build his business, “I can drop my kids off at 9 and be back in time to pick them up.” That flexibility initially took Chris by surprise, “I thought startups were all one and the same – that everyone starts this business to get a big windfall. But really, small businesses should serve the people involved in it.”

“

AT THE CIC COLLABORATIVE, EVERYBODY IS FOCUSING...

I think when you're surrounded by other people whose focus is work, it creates that atmosphere that helps you to be a little more intentional.”



To learn more about that flexibility, gather resources to start a business, and find like-minded people, Chris says his biggest advice to future entrepreneurs is coming to CIC and SBDC. “You can start small. You can do it affordably, in ways where there's not as much [financial] investment, and then kind of scale as you need.”

Tobey Media remains committed to creating a supportive and secure space for small business owners and entrepreneurs across Virginia through the power of storytelling. To explore Chris' collaborations and partnerships, visit www.tobeymedia.com.

A circular portrait of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, smiling. She is wearing a light blue t-shirt with a small graphic on the chest. The background is a lush green forest. To the left of the portrait is a teal circular graphic containing text.

Robin Criscuolo
@robins_nest_nature_playschool

ROBYN'S NEST

Robin's Nest is an outdoors Early Childhood Education Program in Crozet, Virginia.

"The blueprint for the rest of your life is formed in the early years." — Robin Criscuolo

Robin Criscuolo's passion for exploration and early childhood education began during her upbringing in rural Virginia and eventually led to the creation of Robin's Nest, an outdoor education program based in Crozet, Virginia. Robin's Nest's programming is centered around the belief that a child's curiosity should be the biggest motivating factor behind their education. Robin says, "As adults, it is easy for us to overlook the creative capacity these kids already have. They don't need us to hold their hand, they need us to uplift them into what they already have."

On Robin's Nest's acre-large outdoor campus, children safely explore and interact with nature, letting their inquisitive spirits lead the way. This unique environment stimulates all components of learning — from touch and

smell to self-driven exploration and classical guidance from experienced educators.

The path to creating Robin's Nest wasn't always clear. Despite over a decade of experience working with children, Robin was initially hesitant to start her own business. It was during the Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) [Entrepreneur Workshop](#) that her vision began to take shape. "Launching my business was a whole new part of my life, and it was a while before I was ready to do that. CIC was my first step," Robin told us. After starting with CIC, Robin connected with a series of mentors who helped her accelerate her business timeline. By the end of the workshop, she was open for business!

Though she was initially intimidated by the various logistical challenges associated with entrepreneurship, CIC programs gave her the necessary tools to let her business thrive. Through the CIC [Financial Management Program \(FMP\)](#), she found the courage to pursue her lifelong dream of creating an intentional nature-based, childhood



development program. FMP coaching helped Robin create a blueprint for business expansion, allowing her to grow both the size of her campus and increase her number of operational days from 2 to 4 – all within the first year!

CIC stood alongside Robin for over a year as she expanded the program. Robin's nest is now licensed by the Department of Education and operates year round. Robin is happy to give children the chance to engage in outdoor learning even when they can't be enrolled in traditional schooling. "Growing up, I never thought I would own my own business, but being around other folks on that path who believed in me and said 'you can do this' made me think, maybe I can," Robin reflected.

Following her graduation from the workshop, Robin connected with a CIC mentor to help her manage the expansion of Robin's Nest. She met her mentor, Hope Lawrence, in the Spring of 2023. Mentorship helped Robin in the most challenging moments of self-doubt. She described it as the best part of the CIC community because, "you have someone to celebrate with!" Those celebrations have been numerous – from purchasing a permanent campus to expanding class sizes and achieving DoE certification.

As a hub for mentors, business resources, and community support, CIC has witnessed Robin's Nest become an integral part of the Charlottesville-Albemarle community, contributing to a broader understanding of outdoor learning.

Now enrolling, Robin's Nest is ready to welcome new families who seek a safe, creative alternative for early childhood education.



“

Launching my business was a whole new part of my life, and
it was a while before I was ready to do that.”

CIC WAS MY FIRST STEP.



A circular portrait of Christian "Ceejay" Renner-Thomas. He is a Black man with a beard and glasses, wearing a cap and a blue t-shirt. He is smiling and holding a glass pipe in his right hand. The background is a workshop with various tools and equipment.

Christian “Ceejay” Renner-Thomas

@milkglassblowing

MILK GLASS

Milk Glass is a mobile glass studio in Charlottesville.

A new venture is taking shape in Charlottesville – one that combines art, craftsmanship, and community. Milk Glass, a glassblowing business founded by Christian “Ceejay” Renner-Thomas, is the culmination of years of dedication, learning, and commitment to bringing something unique to the local art scene.

The story of Milk Glass begins not with glass, but with a simple notebook and a drawing of Tweety Bird. “I got into art because I found a notebook that my sister had,” Ceejay recalls. “She drew Tweety Bird. I was like, ‘Oh, this is kind of cool.’ And that was the spark that started me drawing.” From these humble beginnings, a lifelong love for art was born. Though he was more interested in sports growing up in Roanoke, Virginia, everything changed in 11th grade when he took his first art class and met a mentor who would shape his future. “He had a profound impact on my life,” Ceejay says. “He helped me prepare for the next stage of life after school.”

Ceejay’s path to glassblowing wasn’t planned. After initially being rejected from VCU, he attended community college. He later reapplied to VCU Arts and was accepted. A workshop called “Space Research” piqued his interest. “I fell in love with the process, technique, and trying to make things disappear,” he recalls, leading him to glassblowing. The challenge of working with such a difficult material, glass, combined with the artistry required was something he couldn’t resist. “It’s kind of magical,” he says. “People describe it as choreography because you’re sort of moving around. You need a partner or assistance. A lot of times you’re not saying any words, and you’re waiting for cues to do things.” “Glassblowing requires precision, timing, and a deep understanding of the material. There’s still a lot of trial and error,” Ceejay admits. “In theory, I can make a drinking glass in 10 minutes—if I hit all the moves right. But it takes 1,000 reps to master those moves and get it right every time.”

The idea for Milk Glass began to take shape a few years ago after a conversation with a neighbor led Ceejay to



enroll in the Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) [Entrepreneur Workshop](#). “I think the [workshop](#) does a good job going over the different topics with different speakers,” he says. “It’s helped me think about things that I wouldn’t think about otherwise, like the marketing aspect – thinking about, okay, how am I going to get the word out, or how am I going to come up with a campaign to advertise to people?”

The [16-week signature series](#) not only provided him with valuable business skills but also introduced him to a network of like-minded entrepreneurs. “The community, the connections, and the commitment that you have to put in – it says something,” Ceejay reflects. “It’s been rewarding to

dedicate four months to this journey.”

As Milk Glass continues to evolve, Ceejay’s vision is becoming a reality. “Where art, hospitality, and entertainment meet; that is where Milk Glass is,” he explains. “We believe people should enjoy sharing memorable experiences, and we want everyone to feel welcome and like they belong.”

This vision gained significant momentum when Milk Glass launched a Kickstarter campaign in the fall of 2024, successfully raising over \$35,000 with support from more than 150 backers. These funds have enabled Ceejay to acquire essential equipment and supplies for the mobile studio, including tools and a trailer. The final piece, a furnace with an annealer (a device that slowly cools glass), was also purchased so Milk Glass can host pop-up events around Charlottesville.

The business has already built a strong local presence through [LaunchPad](#) at the IX Farmers Market. “Being able to set up at the Farmer’s Market without the burden of the overhead cost was like a breath of fresh air,” Ceejay shares. The consistent exposure proved invaluable. Milk Glass had regular sales throughout the fall and winter seasons culminating in a complete sellout at the Christmas Market.

“

THE WORKSHOP DOES A GOOD JOB GOING OVER THE DIFFERENT TOPICS.



It's helped me think about things that I wouldn't think about otherwise, like the marketing aspect."



The momentum continues to build for Milk Glass—Ceejay was selected as a finalist for Charlottesville SOUP, a public community dinner series created to crowdfund grants for artists in the city of Charlottesville and the counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson, hosted by New City Arts. The event allowed him to pitch his project alongside three other artists, with attendees voting for the winner. While he initially felt like an underdog, the experience helped him refine his pitch and clarify his 'why.' Winning the competition was a surreal moment, providing both affirmation and increased visibility for Milk Glass, leading to more community interest and opportunities for collaboration.

More than just securing funding, SOUP connected Ceejay more deeply to Charlottesville's arts community, and he now encourages others to apply.

These milestones have helped Milk Glass gain momentum while the CIC [Financial Management Program \(FMP\)](#) has played a crucial role in laying a financial foundation. With guidance and accountability, Ceejay now grasps the financial aspects of running a business — from tracking expenses in QuickBooks to understanding cash flow. “It’s been helpful to have someone hold me accountable while I get a grip on the financial side of things,” he says. “Even though sales have been slow, I know I’m developing habits that will keep me on track long-term.”

As Milk Glass continues to grow, one thing is clear: It’s not just about creating beautiful glass art — it’s about building connections, one piece at a time. “I try to be as optimistic as possible,” Ceejay says, “without counting my eggs before they hatch.” With the passion, dedication, and increasing support behind Milk Glass, the future looks bright.



MINDSALT

MindSalt is a comprehensive business consulting firm that embraces a dynamic, full-business approach to profit, productivity, and time management.

Ann Thompson and David Deaton have always craved impact. As business leaders with decades of experience, they knew how the gratification of a job well done felt long before they met each other. However, when Ann moved to Charlottesville in 2017, she knew she wanted more than entrepreneurial success. She wanted to help redefine a community, so she met with various local leaders, including Keir Zander, who at the time was a staff member of Community Investment Collaborative (CIC).

Ann's chat with Keir turned into a life-changing meeting as she learned about CIC's commitment to bettering the Virginia business community. Keir explained that CIC was always looking for volunteers with business expertise, and Ann's background in cost cutting and productivity would make her the perfect volunteer for the CIC [Entrepreneur Workshops](#).

David Deaton had worked in the non-profit space for years, focused on mission development and organizational design. Like Ann, he volunteered for the CIC [Entrepreneur Workshops](#). One day, David and Ann were assigned to the same workshop where they both spoke. Ann was the first to go and captivated David's attention. The same thing happened when it was David's turn to speak. Following the workshop, David introduced himself to Ann and their business partnership officially began. "CIC talks a lot about network capital, [and] what can really define your success is your network," David told us, "that's how we met!"

Volunteerism at CIC brought together the two Charlottesville community pioneers and allowed MindSalt to be born. MindSalt is a business consulting firm dedicated to unlocking client possibilities and empowering business organizations.

David and Ann have continued to volunteer at CIC as mentors, workgroup leaders, and discussion leaders. "I relate to the entrepreneurs a lot; it means a lot to help people become thriving members of a community," Ann said.



**David Deaton &
Ann Thompson
Hawker**

themindsalt.com

The MindSalt team has remained committed to supporting the organization that brought them together. Four years since meeting at a workgroup, you will still find them serving in various capacities throughout CIC's programs and events such as [Office Hours](#) and [Resource Fairs](#).

"We stay with it because the impact isn't just immediate; we get to see how it grows over time," David said. Both made a point to recognize CIC's spillover effect. "There's a reputational spillover of goodwill in the Virginia community that helps entrepreneurs years after they graduate," they both commented.

When asked to summarize their message to the CIC community, David and Ann had one thing in mind: "Do it. You won't regret it." From meeting as volunteers dedicated to supporting small businesses to dedicated mentors and longstanding business partners, David and Ann are the face of the CIC volunteer community because they took a chance. When asked if volunteering was worth the effort, David and Ann left with this: "Every extra minute we spend with CIC is twice as much impact. It's worth it."

“

We stay with it [volunteering] because the impact isn't just immediate;

WE GET TO SEE HOW IT GROWS OVER TIME.

Maya Hairston

labeledlex.com



LABELEDLEX

LabeledLex is a luxury brand currently offering high-quality handbags for women, men, and children.

In February 2023, Maya Hairston launched LabeledLex with a clear vision – to create affordable, high-quality handbags for those who appreciate luxury, but can't always afford premium designer brands. Now, her business stands as a demonstration of what passion, perseverance, and the right support can accomplish.

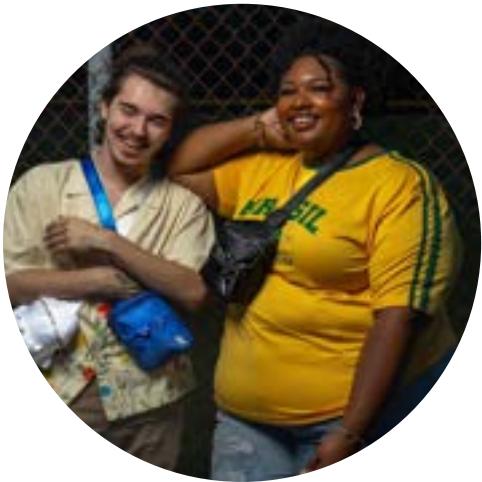
"I've always loved handbags and owned many, but I wasn't in a position to afford luxury brands like Gucci or Louis Vuitton," Maya shares. This personal experience shaped her business model. After years of purchasing lower-quality bags that didn't last, she envisioned something better – stylish, durable handbags at accessible price points.

Maya named her company by combining "Labeled," a versatile term that could represent growth beyond handbags, with "Lex," derived from her middle name, Alexis. This thoughtful approach to branding reflects her long-term vision for the company.

Despite having a minor in Business Administration, Maya discovered significant knowledge gaps when she began her entrepreneurial journey. "I didn't realize how much I didn't know – especially about finances, taxes, and business operations," she admits. To build her business expertise, Maya participated in Dream Launch, a six-week program in Danville that helped her develop a comprehensive business plan. She also attended workshops through RISE Collaborative, gaining crucial insights into finances, marketing, and operational costs.

Maya's relationship with the Community Investment Collaborative (CIC) began during Dream Launch and deepened after attending the RISE Summit in Fall 2024. There, she learned about the [Microloan Program](#) from Carolina and Stephen's presentation, which prompted her to apply.

The impact of this financial support has been transformative for LabeledLex's financial health. The [microloan](#) enabled Maya to consolidate high-interest business debt from



credit cards, significantly reducing interest payments. This newfound financial breathing room has allowed her to reinvest in her business, specifically funding her spring collection featuring new Blossom Flex bags in fresh colors. "Now, I'm paying less interest and saving money," Maya explains, highlighting how this investment created a direct pathway to inventory expansion and seasonal growth that might otherwise have been impossible.

Like many entrepreneurs, Maya faces numerous challenges. Finding affordable retail space in high-traffic areas has been difficult. However, she's proud of her current location, which allows her to host events like cocktail hours and

entrepreneur meetups called "Stronger Together." Staffing presents another obstacle, as she currently manages everything independently. Thankfully, she's found an innovative solution by sharing her retail space with another Black-owned business. "When I'm not there, she promotes my handbags, and I do the same for her services. It's a great example of small businesses supporting each other," Maya explains.

Another obstacle Maya is overcoming is her work-life balance. She's developing better time management skills and creating marketing calendars to maintain consistency, which she's found directly impacts her results.

Maya challenges the common misconception that entrepreneurship leads to overnight success. "I've had my business for two years and haven't paid myself yet," she reveals. With about \$6,000 in profit after expenses last year, she emphasizes that this is normal for early-stage businesses, many of which don't turn a profit for five years.

Her message to aspiring entrepreneurs is grounded in reality. "If you have a dream, you can achieve it — but start small and think big."

“

**IF YOU HAVE A DREAM,
YOU CAN ACHIEVE IT,
but start small and think big.”**



She initially envisioned a storefront in a prime location, but had to begin with what she could afford. Now she's building her business strategically, one step at a time, thanks to the financial backing from CIC.

With a foundation strengthened by community investment, Maya continues to focus on providing excellent customer service and high-quality products. Her customers already ask when she'll expand to wallets, apparel, and sandals —

expansions she sees as exciting future possibilities. As LabeledLex grows, Maya carries with her the lessons from CIC's business development programs and the financial stability the [microloan](#) provides. Her journey exemplifies how organizations like CIC can help transform passion projects into sustainable businesses, create ripple effects throughout local economies and empower entrepreneurs to realize their visions.

"Entrepreneurship is hard, but it's possible," Maya affirms. "If I can do it, so can you."



FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2024	2023
Cash and cash equivalents	\$865,348	\$1,173,568
Outstanding loans (net of 15% allowance for loan loss reserve)	\$1,331,437	\$1,049,208
Accounts and grants receivable	\$463,707	\$338,138
Property and equipment	\$136,799	\$239,586
Prepaid expenses	\$15,804	\$0
Other assets	\$2,058	\$2,058
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,815,153	\$2,802,558
Current Liabilities	\$102,443	\$76,559
Operating Lease Liability	\$56,408	\$150,215
Loan(s) Payable	\$396,578	\$300,000
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$555,429	\$526,774
Net Assets with donor restrictions	\$1,793,494	\$1,681,849
Net Assets without donor restrictions	\$466,230	\$593,935
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$2,815,153	\$2,802,558

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

REVENUES	2024	2023
Public Support	\$667,117	\$666,300
Government Support	\$1,158,322	\$994,326
Earned and Program Revenue	\$266,361	\$124,850
New Loan Funds	\$302,396	\$255,000
Interest Earnings	\$20,246	\$24,889
TOTAL REVENUES	\$2,414,442	\$2,065,365
EXPENSES		
CIC Programs	\$1,244,972	\$834,093
Financing & Loan Programs	\$434,250	\$427,835
Grants to businesses	\$215,214	\$218,051
Loan Loss Provision	\$79,212	\$116,869
CVSBDC Programs	\$501,180	\$512,533
Management and General	\$158,035	\$116,072
Fundraising	\$92,065	\$106,751
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,430,502	\$1,997,284
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	-\$16,060	\$68,081

SPECIAL THANKS TO...

SUPPORTERS

PREMIER (\$10K AND ABOVE)

Anonymous (2)
Albemarle County
Anne and Gene Worrell Foundation
Bank of America
Capital One
CDFI Fund at the U.S. Department of Treasury
Charles and Ann Thacher
Charlottesville Area Community Foundation
City of Charlottesville
Culpeper County
Elizabeth Willingham
Farkas Family Foundation
First Citizens Bank
Fluvanna County
Greene County
Hartfield Foundation
Harvest Foundation
Louisa County
Orange County
Sentara Foundation
Small Business Administration
Truist

VISIONARY (\$5K TO \$10K)

Aaron and Candice Hark
Bama Works Fund at CACF
GovSmart
James and Patricia Atkinson
Laura and Hasty Horn
W. McIlwaine and Elsie Thompson
Madison County
Nelson County
Nick and Natasha Lawler
Northern Piedmont Community Foundation

EXECUTIVE (\$1K TO \$5K)

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Acorn Alcinda Foundation
Atlantic Union Bank
Brian Carlton and Liz Sumpter
Carol Wise and Nancy Weiss
Congregation Beth Israel
D's Pretty Events
Danielle Hopkins
Don and Janemarie King
Emergent Financial Services
Holly and Todd Kennedy
Invest in Others Grants for Good
Jacob and Susan D'Aniello
Jefferson Technology Services, LLC
Kirsten Ashbaugh
Michael Latsko

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