



Saugeen Connects
515 Mill Street
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Press Release
For Immediate release

Saugeen Connects Announces 2026 Student Start-Up Program Participants

NEUSTADT, ON: Saugeen Connects is celebrating another successful year of its Student Start-Up Program (SSUP), with strong interest from aspiring young entrepreneurs across the region.

Now in its seventh year, the program has supported more than 358 students by providing start-up funding, mentorship, training, and hands-on entrepreneurial experience throughout the summer months.

Interest in this year's Saugeen Connects Student Start-Up Program was exceptionally strong, with a high number of applications submitted. Each application was carefully reviewed to ensure all program criteria and conditions were met. Following this comprehensive process, and in alignment with available sponsorship funding, 40 students were selected to take part in the 2026 program.

Forty Students Launch Businesses This Summer

This summer, 40 students will operate 38 unique businesses across the Saugeen Connects region. Their ventures include lawn care, babysitting, tutoring, dog walking, custom jewelry, thrifted clothing and accessories, baked goods, food products, vehicle detailing, bicycle refurbishment, 3D printing services, and many other innovative entrepreneurial pursuits.

The Student Start-Up Program is available to students in Grades 6–12 residing within the Saugeen Connects catchment area and provides participants with an opportunity to develop business skills, gain valuable experience, and earn income while exploring entrepreneurship.

Community Support Makes the Program Possible

The 2026 Student Start-Up Program was made possible through the generous support of municipalities, community organizations, businesses, and individual sponsors. Together, Saugeen Connects raised \$26,050 to support youth entrepreneurship throughout the region.

Saugeen Connects would like to recognize the support of Bruce County, Grey County, Saugeen Economic Development Corporation, and Wellington County.

Special recognition is extended to our 5-Star Sponsors:

- Walkerton Legion
- CMR Insurance – Daniel & Melanie Craig Memorial
- Blessings to You Centre
- Hanover Bentinck & Brant Agricultural Society
- Hanover Raceway
- Live By Design Immigration Services
- Mildmay-Carrick Optimist Club
- Township of Wellington North

Our 3-Star Sponsors include:

- Walkerton District Optimist Club
- HIPP Entrepreneur (Hanover's Innovative Peoples Program)
- Hanover Lions Club
- 88.7 The River
- Teeswater Kinsmen Club
- Hanover Rotary Club
- BJ Industries
- Harriston Legion

Our 1-Star Sponsors include:

- Minto Chamber of Commerce
- Palmerston Lions Club
- Clifford Rotary Club
- Harriston Kinsmen Club
- Hanover Chamber of Commerce
- Buddsteel Architectural Products
- Teeswater Swans
- South Bruce Community & Business Association
- Mildmay Chamber of Commerce
- Walkerton Kinsmen Club

Additional appreciation is extended to the Formosa Lions Club for their friendship and ongoing support of the program.

Saugeen Connects is grateful for the continued commitment of all sponsors and partners whose contributions help foster youth entrepreneurship and economic growth throughout the region.

Meet the 2026 Student Entrepreneurs

Saugeen Connects is pleased to introduce the 40 students participating in the 2026 Student Start-Up Program. Residents are encouraged to support these young business owners throughout the summer. Look for SSUP participants at local farmers' markets, the Minto Summer Student Night Market, Youth Day at Hanover Raceway, the Hanover Fair, and other community events throughout the region.

- Gavin Kaastra-Penner – Dough-pamine
- Clara Scott – Clara’s Little Learners
- Adelyn King – The Charm Sisters
- Rachel Van Straten – Rachel’s Crochet & Craft
- Talhia Lund-Wardell – Duck’s Crafty Creations
- Charlotte DeCaire – Pets Play
- Lucas Morley – Lucas’ Printables
- Ruth Bolton – Knead On Artisan Bread
- Mikayla Kerr – Mikayla’s Nails
- Valentina Benavente – Roots of Grace
- Emily Van Straten – Emily’s Garden Goods
- Aubrey Holmes – Babysitter By Aubrey
- Paisley Crossley – Paw Energy Dog Walking By Paisley
- Reese Wilson – HWY 4 DOGS
- Aevalyn McMurray – Fluers Farm
- Maya Booth – Munchkin Management
- Violet Dilts – Vivi’s Sweet Treats
- Tyler Rutherford – Lawn King Lawn Care
- Evie Schnurr and Ruby Folmer – R&E Babysitting Services
- Jacob Christensen – Roll ‘N Cones
- Savannah Gillet – Savannah Henna Swirls
- Kashtaya Hambrock – Hambrock’s Pumpkin Patch
- Mahmoud Almhammad – FixFlow Machines
- Kolbie Greig – Helping Hands
- Mason Wettlaufer – Cracked Fresh
- Xavier and Alexander Ellis – Dual Edge Twin Blade Skate Sharpening
- Carter Baker – Bakers Acres Eggs
- Ava Corbett – Ava’s Baked Goods
- Tyler Kornelsen – Doctor Freeze
- Mason Decaire – MKD Abstracts

- Cora Ernest – At Nails By Cora
- Quinn Valeriotte – Paws
- Lily Baker – Lil-Bug Creations
- Kaydence Golley – Cakes By KK
- Evan Graul – EE (Evan’s Eggs)
- Caleb Danquah – Green Mowers
- Emilia Baetz – Sweet & Sour Drinks
- Ephraim MacArthur – Mow Bros Lawn Care

About Saugeen Connects

Saugeen Connects is a regional partnership between Saugeen Economic Development Corporation and the municipalities of Brockton, Hanover, Minto, South Bruce, and Wellington North. The initiative works collaboratively to support economic growth, youth retention and development, business growth and retention, workforce development, and immigrant attraction throughout the region.

For more information about the Student Start-Up Program or to connect with participating youth entrepreneurs, visit: saugeenconnects.com/youth

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