

ATWOOD INNOVATION PLAZA

A valuable local resource for businesses at any stage—from an idea or concept in startup mode to a well-established 100+ employee corporation needing fresh insight on how to scale.



By: Elaine Ciaramella

It's no secret the road to entrepreneurship can be a treacherous one. Often, it's filled with roadblocks, setbacks, sleepless nights, detours, and even dead ends, especially when you're a lone ranger who never embarked down the entrepreneurial path. Atwood Innovation Plaza at DSU located in St. George, however, was created to help innovators and contrary to popular belief, it's not just available to DSU students, it's available to everyone in the community.

I sat down with Colby Jenkins, Director, Atwood Innovation Plaza, Dixie State University to learn all about Atwood Innovation Plaza and its resources, so I could share his insight with readers.

Jenkins describes the Atwood Innovation Plaza as a launch pad, a greenfield where ideas and those who bring them may gain support, incubate, grow, and then launch. "While the Innovation Plaza is a Dixie State University facility located directly across to the west from the university's football stadium, we welcome and serve all who wish to participate, both students of all ages and members of the community, says Jenkins.

All are welcome, both students and community members, he says. "We support a complete pipeline of activities. For example, our Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (or STEM) Academy serves the kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) population, while our other programs support all others.

"The Innovation Plaza is also home to the Academy for Computers and Engineering (or ACE) Academy, which is a STEM magnet program for gifted and talented students sponsored by the Washington County School District, Dixie State University and SUCCESS Academy. The mission of the ACE Academy is to engage students in early college project-based learning opportunities in computer



science and engineering," he says.

The Atwood Innovation Plaza is a one-stop shop for individuals of all ages and backgrounds looking to launch or grow their businesses. The Innovation Plaza's offerings include workshops, a business resource center sponsored by Zions Bank that provides NO-COST business consultations, as well as education about business basics.

It has a makerspace for students, community members and business owners to create prototypes and perform small-run manufacturing, allowing innovators to research ideas, gain proof of concept, and secure patents, trademarks, and copyrights.

When I asked Jenkins when people should come to Atwood Innovation Plaza, he said there's no specific point when people should come. "We welcome not only ideas in their infancy, but also ideas that are perhaps already mature, exist as a business and are simply looking for reinforcement or new direction." Jenkins and his teammates are capable of helping at every stage of business

ideation, he explained.

The Innovation Plaza's general mission is to provide support for entrepreneurs of all ages, says Jenkins. "Among



many things, we find ways to connect needs with resources, mentor, identify critical market activities, assist with business planning, patent and protect ideas (for the idea owner), prepare entrepreneurs for investment opportunities, provide a top-notch platform for pitching ideas to interested audiences, and enable prototyping

or ideation via our makerspace, Utah's largest most modern makerspace," he says.

The Innovation Plaza's four primary departments are:

- 1) Innovation Guidance and Solutions (specializes in helping the idea owner to protect his or her idea via patent research and application, as well as copyright or trademark protections as needed);
- 2) Business Resource Center (assists entrepreneurs in developing and growing businesses);
- 3) Makerspace (loaded with 3D printers of various sizes and shapes, as well as laser wood cutters, large graphic printers, computer terminals, a large wood shop and similarly large metal shop); and
- 4) Incubator (pitch competition winners gain access to this open, creative-energy-infused workspace where winning ideas grow under continued mentoring and collaboration).

Now that you have a pretty good idea of what the Innovation Plaza can do for students and the community, here are three examples of companies that are taking advantage of its resources:

Steribin

John Cole is the Chief Executive Officer of Steribin. John is not a student of DSU, but he is DSU alumni and he majored in business administration. Cole has always been interested in growing businesses. He started investing in and consulting for young companies as "somewhat

of a hobby," he explained. That is how he originally got involved in the concept behind Steribin – it seemed like an intriguing investment.

According to Cole, Steribin has developed a patented device that can disinfect airport security bins (the plastic bins you put your belongings in at the security line) in just a handful of seconds. By using ultraviolet light, our device can quickly and effectively kill bacteria and viruses found on these bins without causing any delays in the security process," says Cole.

When I asked Cole what problem Steribin is solving, he said their team started developing the device back in 2018, long before COVID-19 was a common word. "Studies were performed worldwide that showed that the bins, which nearly everyone has to touch, were more than 18 times more contaminated than the toilets in airport bathrooms. The bins are considered the most germ-filled item in an



airport!" according to Cole.

Cole says toilets have a regular cleaning schedule, but security bins are infrequently cleaned, if ever. "There has not been a fast or effective solution for airports to disinfect those bins and our product can meet that need. Essentially, our device can help reduce risk of spreading illnesses and help increase safety in the travel industry."

As an investor, the concept behind Steribin was very appealing to Cole. He was a regular business traveler and always hated touching those bins, so he was excited when he saw a feasible solution. When he expressed interest in being an investor, the investors asked if he would be willing to serve as the CEO as well.

Steribin was officially formed in late-2019 and they have



been aggressively developing a world-class product since. Their ultimate goal is to have a Steribin device in every commercial airport worldwide. “We want our device to become standard equipment, just like an X-ray machine is common in every security line you go through. With billions of passengers flying each year and statistics showing that many people get sick from flying, our device can make a major positive impact on the world by reducing the spread of harmful bacteria and viruses,” he said.

The security bins have been a problem long before COVID-19, and they will continue to be a problem until it is addressed. Cole and his team continue to work on the necessary approvals from TSA in order to begin using the devices in airport security lines.

According to Cole, Atwood Innovation Plaza has helped them build their business while keeping their overhead low. “We’ve been a tenant at AIP for more than a year. It has been a wonderful experience interacting with other entrepreneurs and helping one another with our unique businesses,” he said, adding that they’ve been able to design and build certain components in the Makerspace and enlist the help of various students and interns. “The AIP is such a wonderful resource for the local business community.”

OxySwitch

Meet Majere Wintch, the inventor of OxySwitch LLC. Wintch was born in Idaho, but moved to St. George when she was eight-years-old. In her senior year of high school, Wintch decided to pursue a career in healthcare.

“None of my family were healthcare workers. Neither of my parents had even gotten a degree themselves, so college was a new experience for all of us,” said Wintch. In high school, she enrolled in the SUCCESS Academy program, which allows students to earn their associate degrees at the same time they earn their high school diplomas.

Wintch went on to graduate high school with an associate in general sciences and she completed all of her medical prerequisites in her senior year, enabling her to enter directly into her medical program as soon as she graduated. Wintch graduated from the respiratory program and passed her license exams just before her 20th birthday, making her one of the youngest people to pass through the program.

Wintch graduated from DSU’s respiratory therapy program in December 2017, so she no longer takes classes at DSU, but she was working on OxySwitch before the physical Innovation Plaza was established at the old elementary school. Last year, OxySwitch





competed in the Bench to Bedside medical innovation competition at the University of Utah as the first-time in history that DSU was invited to attend.

“We made it into the final 10 competitors. Even though we didn’t win, I still felt that the whole process was a huge step for showing the other colleges and universities in Utah, the great ideas that are coming out of our school. This

year, OxySwitch won the first pitch competition put on by the Plaza itself. We won many great opportunities and aid for our company,” she said.

While working as a student, Wintch would often see issues that needed to be fixed.

Her invention, the OxySwitch, removes the trouble of patient oxygen desaturation when switching between devices. It also allows multiple devices to be connected and ready to go if needed.

“An example of its need is with a young patient I saw in the ER. We were treating a 3-year-old who had inhaled a weed and gotten it lodged in the wall of her throat.

“I had a cannula in her nose giving Oxygen flow. We put her to sleep so the doctor could go down in her throat to pull out the weed. It should have been a simple procedure, however, when the doctor would push on her tongue and go down into her throat, she’d stop breathing and her oxygen would drop from the 90s to the 60s in a matter of seconds.

“The child would start turning blue. At this time I would have to remove the cannula from flow, hook up the Resuscitation bag, and give her breaths until or oxygen came back up and she started breathing again. Then, I’d have to switch the devices again to the cannula so the doctor could work.

“She’d do it again and the cycle repeated. If an OxySwitch had been available, I could have had both devices hooked up at the same time, and simply switched the direction of flow instantly to whatever one I needed. The patient wouldn’t have desaturated so low and it would have made the whole procedure safer and less stressful for all in the room,” said Wintch. As an RT now, Wintch doesn’t have a single day that she doesn’t wish she had one.

At the Innovation Plaza, Wintch has a civil engineer who has improved her designs and continues to impress her with the changes and improvements he makes. She says she wouldn’t be where she is if it weren’t for the amazing partners and team members that work so hard to create a successful environment to grow OxySwitch.

Right now, Wintch is looking to find an investor to bring the project to completion. As to if they think they will start up a company themselves or sell to another company for royalties or shares, that is yet to be decided. Wintch just wants OxySwitch to improve patient care, increase patient safety, and simplify healthcare workers’ lives and works, she said.

“If you have an idea to improve the world, a thought, a creation, a desire to be more and create more, the plaza is a place for you. Everyone there is there to help us succeed and progress. To not take advantage of the amazing opportunities it provides would be a shame. It is truly an incredible program.”

MedLite ID, Inc.

Rodney Schutt is the president and CEO of MedLite ID, a simple to use, disposable medical device that enables clinicians to accurately and efficiently identify a single medication infusion line versus similar infusion lines in all light settings. It is the only solution on the market that lights the primary medication line and it’s safer, more efficient, and less stressful than current practices.

In 2008, Dr. Wayne Provost’s 16-year-old son, Dusty, was diagnosed with Acute Myelogenous Leukemia and infusion line confusion was a regular problem at the ICU during Dusty’s hospital stays. On the average day, Dusty had five IV lines and up to eleven infusion lines.

Dr. Provost witnessed the time and frustration experienced by healthcare workers as they tried to locate the



proper infusion line and he knew there had to be a better way. Determined to help find a practical solution, Dr. Provost discovered the best approach was to light the main medication line, and that's how MedLite ID came to be. "We understand that managing patients with multiple IV-infusions can be challenging and frustrating. Studies conducted at DSU School of Nursing and an Intermountain Healthcare hospital showed MedLite ID improved patient safety and reduced the stress associated with the complexity of multiple IV infusion lines by making the line-tracing task faster and easier," said Schutt. MedLite ID is solving Infusion Confusion and Spaghetti Syndrome. The device virtually eliminates the need for a clinician to line trace the primary medication infusion line, sometimes referred to as the "safe line." MedLite ID dramatically reduces medical errors relating to Adverse Drug Events (ADEs), he said.

The problem is the 440,000 medical error deaths that occur each year. In 2017, the ECRI Institute named infusion errors as it's #1 healthcare technology hazard. In the same year, 21% of Americans reported that they or a member of their family experienced a medical error, and 31% reported someone else whose care they were closely involved with had an error. What's more, 60% of all IV infusions contained one or more errors, 65% of which were mistakes related to IV tubing labeling.

Simply put, MedLite ID improves patient safety, clinician efficiency and reduces caregiver stress by making it easier to do the right thing. When I asked Schutt how Atwood Innovation Plaza helps him, he said it does by providing excellent resources, tools, and space to facilitate advancement of early state companies.

Jenkins says the innovation magic happens when those with experience and a desire to serve drop in for a visit and ask to help. He says St George is rich in talent, especially retired talent full of diverse expertise. "There is no shortage of examples of me matching someone with already established experience and success with someone who is just beginning to learn, grow and prepare for launch. The exchange of ideas that follows between the experienced and the entrepreneur is incredible and truly leads to innovative magic."

While these three examples are fantastic, it's important to note that it's not necessary to have this huge world impact idea to be welcome at Atwood Innovation Plaza. All ideas are welcome, both big and small.

"Important to remember we remain grateful to Lindsay and Laura Atwood, whose name our building and work carry, for their early and generous support and vision. We seek to honor their innovative spirit and desire to support the same in our community. Please learn more online at: innovation.dixie.edu

