

## PRESS RELEASE

**Contact:** Kim Skeltis, APR; 616.419.8385; kim@blueblazepr.com

### **ONE LUCKY WINNER GETS \$50,000 TO START BUSINESS IN LUDINGTON AREA**

*Chamber Launches Fourth Annual Momentum Business Plan Competition to Attract Entrepreneurs,  
Adds New 5x5 Night with \$5,000 Prize*

LUDINGTON, Mich. – May 22, 2018 – Need \$50,000 to get your new business off the ground or to the next level – and want to do it in Mason County? That’s what the [Ludington & Scottville Area Chamber of Commerce](#) is banking on as it launches its fourth annual [Momentum Business Plan Competition](#), offering \$50,000 to one entrepreneur with a viable startup idea or business with less than \$100,000 in sales annually. The winner will be selected at a public pitch night in front of judges and a live audience Sept. 21 at the Ludington Area Center for the Arts.

Participants also can compete for other prize money besides the top prize. In addition to a \$5,000 second prize for the main competition, a new Momentum 5x5 Night will award \$5,000 to one individual plus an automatic spot as a Top 10 finalist in the Momentum Competition.

“The Momentum Business Plan Competition gives people a leg up to launch their business or get it to the next phase, and in the business-friendly environment of Mason County,” said Ludington & Scottville Area Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Kathy Maclean. “The Ludington area has a robust entrepreneurial community, and we want to grow that by giving a boost to startups and entrepreneurs to fulfill their business dreams here. And we’re sweetening the pot this year with an additional prize opportunity.”

Interested and qualified applicants can register at [momentumstartup.org](#) and upload a business plan according to the format by July 31. Eligibility requirements and rules can be found on the contest website. Applicants needing assistance in creating a business plan can book a free appointment with a mentor from the [Ludington Chapter of SCORE](#) either [online](#) or by calling 231-845-0324.

On Aug. 3, a selection committee will shortlist applicants to ten candidates. Five finalists will be selected Aug. 21 who will pitch their ideas in person before the Momentum board and a public audience Sept. 21, 6 to 8 p.m. at the Ludington Area Center for the Arts, 107 S. Harrison St. Past Momentum contestants are allowed to reapply.

#### **New Momentum 5x5 Night Awards \$5,000**

While the large cash purse is \$50,000, contestants also could win smaller prizes. A second place prize of \$5,000 is awarded by the [Mason County Growth Alliance](#) for the second year. And new this year is a Momentum 5X5 Night hosted and sponsored by Epworth Assembly and Epworth Church Association Aug. 15 at Epworth Heights Auditorium, 1161 N. Lakeshore Dr., Ludington. Five applicants will be selected to pitch their business idea for five minutes each in front of four judges and a live audience serving as a fifth judge in the event of a tie. One winner will take home \$5,000, in addition to receiving an automatic spot in the Momentum Competition’s Top 10, and all contestants can practice their pitches to prepare them for Momentum. Investors also may be in the audience, giving entrepreneurs additional exposure for their business ideas. Individuals can apply to both the Momentum Competition and 5x5 Night, or just 5x5 Night. More information is at [momentumstartup.org](#).

“More entrepreneurs are choosing Mason County to set up their small businesses,” said Tom Hinman, talent and entrepreneur development coordinator for the Ludington & Scottville Area Chamber of Commerce. “The

reasonable cost of living, friendly business climate and incredible quality of life draw people to move here. We want to foster that environment through this contest, which also is a great fit with the Chamber’s ‘Live Ludington’ relocation emphasis.”

### **2017 Momentum Winner Thriving**

Last year’s Momentum Competition winner was sisters Wendy Morrow and Cheryl Freeman of Ludington and their floral and events business, [All Occasions Events and Floral](#) at 110 N. James St. in downtown Ludington. Winning the contest not long after moving into their storefront, the sisters applied their 2017 Momentum grant to purchasing equipment for the floral side of the business, including walk-in and display coolers. They also expanded their product line, piloting an automated floral delivery service for businesses to receive fresh flowers weekly or monthly, and a personal shopper service for individuals. On the event side, they are running a robust business with more than 25 weddings booked for 2018. With the grant, they have been able to purchase specialty rental items such as wooden Chiavari chairs, a unique circular arch, plus dishes to add to their collection of antique dinnerware.

“People think \$50,000 is the prize – but it’s just as important to have the mentors,” said Cheryl Freeman about receiving mentoring from the judges as part of winning the competition. “The money certainly catapulted our plans forward, but we also have access to these incredible business minds to help us get there.”

Regarding next steps, Wendy Morrow said, “We’re focused on working with our mentors to develop the business *behind* the business to make sure our structure stays strong. We essentially are running two businesses under the same roof. Before adding more to our repertoire, we want to fine tune what we have to ensure overall success. It has been an amazing year, and we anticipate only more growth as we go along.”

### **Competition Background/“Live Ludington”**

The Momentum Business Plan Competition was spearheaded in 2015 by the [Pennies from Heaven Foundation](#) to foster and grow the entrepreneurial spirit of Mason County where its founder, John Wilson, made his business mark. The competition’s board of directors is comprised of Mason County CEOs and business leaders.

The Ludington & Scottville Area Chamber of Commerce administers the program to encourage new businesses to come to Mason County through the competition and to demonstrate that the region is a ripe environment for small businesses to grow and thrive. A case in point – 65 percent of the 500 Chamber members are small businesses with less than five employees.

The Chamber recently kicked off a [“Live Ludington” relocation campaign](#) to articulate Ludington’s selling points as a livable community. Stories about entrepreneurs who have made Mason County home can be found at [ludington.org/liveludington](http://ludington.org/liveludington).

### **About the Momentum Business Plan Competition**

*Launched in 2015, the Momentum Business Plan Competition awards one business entrepreneur a prize of \$50,000 to start or move an early-stage business to Mason County. A collaborative effort by Pennies from Heaven Foundation, Floracraft, Ludington & Scottville Area Chamber of Commerce, Ludington Daily News, Metalworks, West Shore Bank and Western Land Services, the competition cultivates business formation in Mason County by providing financial resources and mentoring to expedite the startup phase and increase the likelihood of success. Prize money and in-kind support is provided by the previously-mentioned organizations. Visit [momentumstartup.org](http://momentumstartup.org) and [facebook.com/momentumstartup](https://facebook.com/momentumstartup).*

### **About Mason County**

*Situated along the shores of Lake Michigan and home to the cities of Ludington and Scottville as well as the villages of Free Soil, Fountain and Custer, Mason County offers an ideal place to live, work and play. Mason County is home to green energy, manufacturing, agribusiness and tourism industry businesses. For more information, visit [ludington.org](http://ludington.org).*

#####