

For immediate release

Four finalists finish at the top at the FirstOntario 1Awards

Small business owners shared \$200,000 in cash and in-kind services

Hamilton ON, May 31, 2023 – This year’s FirstOntario 1Awards winners bake a stellar cheesecake, brew a tasty caffeinated cold beverage, offer in-demand technology services and give a toque to someone in need for every warm winter hat they sell. Winners were announced at a breakfast gala at Carmen’s Banquet Centre and shared \$25,000 in cash and \$175,000 in professional, in-kind services.

Earlier this month, 10 finalists presented their ideas to program partners at Tim Hortons Field, with Laila’s Cheesecake Co., Kintore Coffee Co., Joe Apps Technology Support Inc. and Toques from the Heart giving winner-worthy pitches to earn the top prizes.

“We had a record-setting number of applications this year as the 1Awards program continues to grow and expand,” said Joanne Battaglia, Senior Vice President, Marketing, Communications and Community Partnerships at FirstOntario Credit Union. “We’re fortunate to be surrounded by business owners who are so passionate about what they do and how they can make an impact. Congratulations to all of the finalists.”

The 1Awards program – now in its eleventh year – would not be possible without the commitment from partners who score every application and presentation and also provide the prizes. Thanks to Agro Zaffiro LLP, Giant Shoe, KPMG, Mohawk Centre for Entrepreneurship, PLAY, The Hamilton Spectator and Weever, winners get access to specialized services (legal, accounting, marketing, digital, financial and advertising).

Additional supporters include The Thornton Group, Carmen’s Group and The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

FirstOntario and 1Awards partners have invested more than \$2 million into small business communities through the Hamilton, Halton, Niagara, Brant and surrounding regions with a goal of helping local entrepreneurs get to the next level and succeed.

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About FirstOntario Credit Union

FirstOntario is a full service cooperative financial institution, serving members for more than 80 years throughout the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario. With \$5.8 billion in assets under management, FirstOntario is one of Canada’s largest credit unions. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award-winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us today at FirstOntario.com.