

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Two Teams Win Big for Their Startups at AFRL Commercialization Academy Demo Day; \$20,000 Awarded

Good People Energy Technologies wins Judges' Vote and \$15,000

Let's Chat About It wins Audience Vote and \$5,000



**ROME, NY** — The AFRL Information Directorate's (AFRL/RI) Commercialization Academy held its Fall Demo Day on November 29, at Griffiss Institute, in Rome, New York. Investors, entrepreneurs, tech enthusiasts, and the local business community, came to watch four innovative, New York State-based, tech startups take the stage to pitch to judges, and an audience of 110, on how they have been disrupting the market with [Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate](#) technologies as a pivotal part of their business model.

\$20,000 from program funders was up for grabs as teams took the stage for four minutes each, pitching audience members and a panel of judges, to see which startup company and AFRL/RI technology-based products and services were most deserving of the money.

The four startup teams who took the stage on Thursday evening were:

**GivDapps** — GivDapps provides crowdfunding opportunities to families in need, and specific community projects that have been vetted by other charitable organizations. GivDapps is a non-profit organization leveraging technology and the power of community relationships to promote transparent charitable giving within local communities.

**Good People Energy Technologies** – Good People Energy’s mission is to make energy saving technology easy, while being an example of responsible stewardship of energy, communities, and human potential. They have created the Phoenix Fan Controller, which provides 10-30% energy savings with improved quiet and comfort, and can be added to existing small fan HVAC systems (PTACs, fan coils, split systems, etc.) to extend their useful lives.

**Inky's Bookshelf** –At Inky, curated selections of books are created based on your reading history and interests. The product is simple, send in a picture of your bookshelf, and once a month a book will be sent to your doorstep.

**Let's Chat About It** - Let's Chat About It is a wellness support platform and online community for those struggling with mental health and substance abuse. Let's Chat About It is a comprehensive online platform that builds a community to share, support, and gain confidence to combat substance abuse and to better their overall mental health.

The judges’ panel evaluated each startup based on such factors as: the ability of the business to affect Upstate New York’s start-up ecosystem and high-tech economy, the culture of innovation that has been created within the startup due to incorporating AFRL technology, the sustainability of the solution beyond the initial startup period, and marketing strategy.

The startups were incubated by early-stage venture capital firm [Wasabi Ventures](#), while embarking on an acceleration process to either build a sustainable startup, or enhance technology from an already existing startup, with Department of Defense Intellectual Property from the Information Directorate.

Ethan Durham and Devin Morgan, co-founders of Good People Energy Technologies, walked away with the judges’ vote and \$15,000, while Garrison Grant, founder of Let’s Chat About It, won the audience vote and \$5,000 for his startup.

The AFRL Commercialization Academy is a Griffiss Institute entrepreneurial education program. Griffiss Institute has partnered with Wasabi Ventures, a successful venture capital firm, to run the academy since 2015. The program is designed to develop entrepreneurial leaders through the commercialization of federal intellectual property to facilitate the growth of Upstate New York’s economy through tech startups, and potentially speed technology products back into the hands of the Department of Defense.

“Who would have thought five years ago that the AFRL Commercialization Academy would have been leading the Air Force in creating startups from the AFRL technologies developed here in Rome, New York”, says Frank Hoke, Tech Transfer Director at Griffiss Institute, “All total, from the beginning, there have been 35 startups created. That is a huge number, and we are now seeing several of them come to fruition, and able to stand on their own two feet. This is in large part, due to outstanding technology envisioned in a new creative market place, but we can’t forget that if it weren’t for the seed funds and award money provided by the local community, none of this would have been possible. In fact, today, one of the startups, InfluenceLogic, paid forward \$5,000 to the Commercialization Academy, and community, in grateful appreciation for all the assistance that was provided by this program. In this

cohort, we had all New York State teams and our intent is to keep this going in the future, to build a strong technical base in Central New York, as well as to positively influence the local economy."

The Fall 2017 AFRL Commercialization Academy Cohort began in August, led by Associate Dean of [Wasabi Ventures Academy](#), [Michele Pesula Kuegler](#), and began with four startup teams commencing a 4-month commercial viability process. Each entrepreneur sought to develop and test strategies to build sustainable startups eligible for licensing, investing, and partnership opportunities.

The 2017 Fall AFRL Commercialization Academy Cohort and Demo Day were made possible by the following generous supporters: [National Grid](#), [Oneida County Industrial Development Agency](#), [The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties](#), [NYSTEC](#), [Rome Industrial Development Corporation](#), [Bank of Utica](#), [Mohawk Valley EDGE](#), [Wasabi Ventures](#) and [InfluenceLogic](#).

The Commercialization Academy is looking for the next great founder. The next program begins in January 2018. Contact Griffiss Institute for more information at 315-838-1696.

*(Photo, left to right: Devin Morgan and Ethan Durham, co-founders of Good People Energy; and Garrison Grant, founder of Let's Chat About It)*

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#### **About Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate**

With headquarters at Rome, NY, the Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate (AFRL/RI) research vector develops novel and affordable Command, Control, Communications, Computing, Cyber, and Intelligence (C4I) technologies. RI is recognized as a national asset and leader in C4I. Refining data into information and knowledge for decision makers to command and control forces is what we do. This knowledge gives our air, space, and cyberspace forces the competitive advantage needed to protect and defend this great nation. Learn more at [www.wpafb.af.mil/afrl/ri](http://www.wpafb.af.mil/afrl/ri).

#### **About the AFRL Commercialization Academy**

The AFRL Commercialization Academy is a Griffiss Institute entrepreneurial education program sponsored by the Air Force Research Laboratory Information Directorate (AFRL/RI) in Rome, NY. The Academy pairs students with high-potential AFRL technologies with the goals of developing entrepreneurial leaders and launching new technology ventures.

To learn more about the AFRL Commercialization Academy, please visit [www.commercializationacademy.org](http://www.commercializationacademy.org).

#### **About Griffiss Institute**

Established in 2002 by the State of New York, the Griffiss Institute is an independent 501(c)(3) entity governed by a board of directors. By partnering the Air Force Research Laboratory Information

Directorate (AFRL/RI) and its technologies with private industry and academia, the Griffiss Institute is able to facilitate and grow the technology base of the Upstate New York region. Since 2014, the Griffiss Institute has successfully enabled the AFRL Commercialization Academy to create over 20 Startups using intellectual property developed in the Information Directorate. The institute has created a collaborative teaming environment accessible to AFRL/RI that provides an environment conducive to the growth of technology and ideas, while creating new business opportunities.

To learn more about Griffiss Institute, please visit [www.griffissinstitute.org](http://www.griffissinstitute.org).

#### **About Wasabi Ventures**

Founded by Chris Yeh and TK Kuegler in 2003, Wasabi Ventures is an early-stage venture capital firm specializing in cofounding, investing in, incubating, building, and advising early-stage technology companies. Its approach allows early-stage startups to gain traction quickly through interaction with its founders. The firm is also involved in entrepreneurial education programs that move cutting-edge technologies out from leading federal, corporate, and university research labs around the world and into the market through the formation of startup ventures.

To learn more about Wasabi Ventures, please visit our website [www.wasabiventures.com](http://www.wasabiventures.com).