



For Immediate Release

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PA Wilds Center announces additional project partners for business incubator space in McKean County

Kane, PA - The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. (PA Wilds Center) has received funding and in-kind support for the development of a business incubator/accelerator space in Kane, McKean County. The space will be located at 59 N. Fraley Street, on the second floor of the Laughing Owl Press Company.

The PA Wilds Center received a \$98,000 Rural Business Development Grant from USDA Rural Development. This program provides grants for rural projects that finance and facilitate the development of small and emerging rural businesses, help fund distance learning networks, and help fund employment-related adult education programs.

PA Wilds Center Founder and Executive Director Ta Enos said The Collins Companies Foundation also provided a grant to help with the project. “The Collins Companies Foundation has supported numerous community development projects in the Pennsylvania Wilds near their local plant, Kane Hardwood,” Enos said. “We’re excited to have their support on this project, too.”

The West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund (WPPSEF) awarded a grant totaling \$20,000 for the business incubator/accelerator space. This funding will be utilized for an energy audit and design plan to optimize energy performance and interpret these energy upgrades at the space for visitors.

“Finding practical ways to bring older downtown buildings in rural PA up to code and make them energy efficient is a big part of revitalizing downtowns in our region,” Enos said. “Our hope is this space can serve as a model for other similar spaces, and we’re grateful to have WPPSEF’s expertise and financial muscle behind us. Because of them, we’ve been able to bring on Envinity, a leader in innovative design, high-performance construction and energy efficiency, to help us with our HVAC and design plans.”





“WPPSEF is a proud partner in helping the PA Wilds Center develop their business incubator/accelerator space in Kane,” said Joel Morrison, WPPSEF Fund Administrator. “Our collaboration with the PA Wilds Center to optimize energy performance of the business incubator/accelerator space will improve the building comfort while reducing utility bills so that savings can be reinvested into the great work that the Center provides to the region.”

The new business incubator/accelerator space, to be named “PA Wilds Media Labs,” will be located on the second floor of the historic Broadbent- Stiteler building in Kane. The owners of the building, Joe and Andrea Lanich, have offered a 10-year, rent-free lease to the PA Wilds Center. The Lanichs’ business, the Laughing Owl Press Co., is a specialty letterpress company located on the first floor of the building. Laughing Owl Press is a long-time member of and supporter of the Wilds Cooperative of Pennsylvania (WCO), the PA Wilds Center’s rural supply chain.

“We are excited to enter into this project with the PA Wilds Center. We feel it will be a catalyst for growth in the local community along with bringing needed resources to existing and future businesses,” said Joe Lanich.

The Kane site was chosen because of its geographic proximity to key PA Wilds Center leadership staff and creative partners that will be involved in the operation of the Media Labs, and its proximity to flagship brick and mortar PA Wilds Conservation Shops – both current (at Kinzua Bridge State Park) and new proposed sites. The location was also chosen for internet connectivity, capacity for shipping for the Conservation Shop, the rent-free lease terms, and funding and in-kind support available at this project location.

“This is an exciting opportunity for all members of The Wilds Cooperative, not just those located in the proximity of McKean county. This lab was forged on community partnerships, volunteer efforts and matching foundation support. In the future, the PA Wilds Center would explore proposals for partnerships of this nature from welcoming communities across the region,” Enos said.

The PA Wilds Media Labs will provide space for the PA Wilds Center to continue to expand its commerce platform selling local products sourced from the WCO, creating more job and wealth



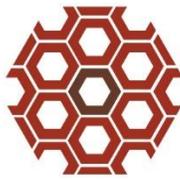


creation opportunities for the many small businesses in its regional supply chain. About 300 businesses and organizations in rural PA participate in the WCO, from micro manufacturers to artisans to craft agricultural producers to unique, to place-based service sector businesses.

PA Wilds Center has invested 10 years into building this network of rural businesses as part of the Pennsylvania Wilds Conservation Landscape, a groundbreaking public-private effort that is growing nature tourism across the region's 12 ½ rural counties. Ed McMahon, a national expert in sustainable community development, last year called the PA Wilds work "one of the greatest rural, natural resource-based economic development programs in the United States." In 2016, PA Wilds piloted a multi-prong commerce platform associated with the region's destination and lifestyle brand to help move local products and services sold by businesses in the WCO. This platform includes brick-and-mortar gift shops, an online store, licensing, professional development opportunities and other components. While still in its infancy, this platform is already putting real dollars into the registers of rural businesses, helping them thrive and create jobs. PA Wilds Center's goal is to grow this commerce platform into one that moves \$4 million in local product annually, helping rural businesses and communities thrive.

Services and technology at the PA Wilds Media Labs will include a professional photography studio, a recording studio, computer lab and classroom and events space. The Media Labs will be outfitted with specialized technologies needed to expand the PA Wilds Center's commerce platforms. Expanding these platforms will help more rural businesses in The Wilds Cooperative connect with customers online and in the physical world and sell products and services so they can thrive and create and sustain jobs. The Media Labs will also provide PA Wilds Center with the virtual and physical meeting spaces and technologies, and the creative hub and networks, to deliver business development workshops specific to Wilds Cooperative members. In the future, the PA Wilds Media Labs will be opened as a resource to the member businesses of the WCO. Other future plans include the offering of a drop-ship school for WCO members selling products through the PA Wilds commerce platform, and potential for youth entrepreneurship programming. The Kane-based company Sixty Foot Films has already donated dozens of hours of technical assistance to AV planning for the space, Enos said.





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Other project partners include the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, PA Department of Community and Economic Development and Appalachian Regional Commission, all of which have made major investments in the Center's regional commerce platform through funding and public-private partnerships that are helping develop the Pennsylvania Wilds brand to benefit local communities.

The PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. (PA Wilds Center) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to integrate conservation and economic development in a way that strengthens and inspires communities in the Pennsylvania Wilds. The Pennsylvania Wilds, one of the state's 11 official tourism regions, covers about a quarter of the Commonwealth and includes the counties of Warren, McKean, Potter, Tioga, Lycoming, Clinton, Cameron, Elk, Forest, Clarion, Jefferson, Clearfield and the northern part of Centre county. The region is known for its more than 2 million acres of public land, and also boasts two National Wild & Scenic Rivers, some of the darkest skies in the country and the largest wild elk herd in the Northeast. Visitors spend an estimated \$1.7 billion in the region each year, according to the most recent statistics.

For more information on the PA Wilds Center's programs and services, please visit www.pawildscenter.org.

For more information about The Wilds Cooperative of PA: WildsCoPA.org

For more information on how the region is being marketed: pawilds.com.

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PO BOX 285
SUGAR GROVE, PA 16350
814-757-9190
PAWILDCENTER.ORG



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PA Wilds Center for Entrepreneurship, Inc. is available by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration