

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 30, 2016

**Contact:**

Heather Smith Baker  
chief operating officer  
Southwest Michigan First  
241 East Michigan Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007  
269.553.9588  
[hsmithbaker@southwestmichiganfirst.com](mailto:hsmithbaker@southwestmichiganfirst.com)

## Southwest Michigan First's Catalyst University Opens Applications for Makers' Mart Competition

**Kalamazoo, MI** – Presented annually by Southwest Michigan First, Catalyst University is now accepting applications for its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Makers' Mart competition, aimed at lifting up local entrepreneurs. Catalyst University, Southwest Michigan's premier leadership conference, will take place on Thursday, January 26, 2017 at Wings Event Center in Kalamazoo. Makers' Mart competition finalists will have the opportunity to present their products or services on stage at the event to compete for \$2,500 cash plus \$2,500 worth of legal, marketing and accounting consultations. The Makers' Mart competition is sponsored by the WMU Haworth College of Business.

"We are excited to welcome our region's entrepreneurs to participate in this year's Makers' Mart competition," said Ron Kitchens, ceo of Southwest Michigan First. "The event promises to bring added excitement to the selection process as we plan to bring our finalists live on stage to present their story and product to the anticipated 2,500 attendees at Catalyst University."

Eligibility requirements are as follows:

- Must sell an existing product or service for consumer purchase.
- Must be a company owned and operated in Southwest Michigan.
- Must have annual sales of \$500,000 or less.
- Must be available to pitch their product on Monday, October 24, 2016 at Southwest Michigan First, 241 East Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.
- Must be available to attend Catalyst University rehearsal in Kalamazoo, MI on January 25, 2017.
- Must go onstage to give the live presentation (no surrogates allowed) at Catalyst University in Kalamazoo, MI on January 26, 2017.
- Must display/sell products or services at Catalyst University.
- Past applicants are allowed, including previous Makers' Mart finalists. Previous winners are also permitted to submit a new product for consideration.

Applications may be submitted now through Monday, October 3, 2016 at <http://www.catalystuniversity.me/recognition/#makersMart>.

### About Catalyst University

Since 2011, Southwest Michigan First annually presents Catalyst University to build existing and future leaders in every sector of the community including business, government, education, not-for-profit, faith-based and economic development. For more information about Catalyst University, please visit [www.catalystuniversity.me](http://www.catalystuniversity.me).

### About Southwest Michigan First

Founded in 1999 on the principle that the most powerful force for change is a job, Southwest Michigan First is an organization of privately funded economic development advisors who act as the catalyst for economic growth in Southwest Michigan. For more information about Southwest Michigan First, please visit us at [www.southwestmichiganfirst.com](http://www.southwestmichiganfirst.com), or call 269.553.9588.



###