



## Updates from the Office of Economic Development

### Luminoah Takes the Top Spot



## LUMINOAH

Charlottesville-based **Luminoah**, claimed the top spot at the 2025 Virginia Start Up World Cup competition. One of ten finalists, the company beat out competitors from

across Virginia during the entrepreneurial pitch competition that took place Friday, August 21st, at the Sadler Center in Virginia Beach.

Luminoah is reimagining the enteral (direct to GI) feeding process with a uniquely designed compact, smart, and easy to use pump system. Anyone who has spent any amount of time with the company's Founder & CEO, Neal Piper, knows this is more than a business endeavor to him. It is a deeply personal pursuit that began when his own son had to go on a feeding tube and Neal just knew there had to be a better way to approach the challenge – one that would improve mobility and overall quality of life for impacted individuals. Fast forward six years and Luminoah is on the cusp of receiving FDA approval for its signature device, a small, lightweight feeding pump that works with a smartphone app to track nutritional intake, even sharing the information directly with the patient's care staff if needed. This system will provide users with greater flexibility in where and how they receive the nutrition, allowing them to live life with more freedom.

Last week's recognition is not the first time the company's life-changing innovation has won awards, but this time it sets Luminoah up to compete against worldwide competition at the Start Up World Cup Finale event in San Francisco this October. The winner of that competition will receive a \$1 million investment prize.

OED has been pleased to support Luminoah through the **Cville Match** program. We wish Neal and his team all the best as they represent Charlottesville's and the entire Commonwealth of Virginia's entrepreneurial community in San Francisco!

### Ready to Work First Cohort Graduation

The City of Charlottesville's Office of Economic Development is proud to celebrate the graduates of the very first Ready to Work cohort model course—Steve Farmer and Mohammed Nauage!

Ready to Work is a free workforce training program that prepares jobseekers for success by providing a soft skills certification, along with support in resume development, interview preparation, and guaranteed interviews with local employers.

Until now, the course was offered exclusively online in a self-paced format. This August, we launched a new four-week, in-person cohort model that allowed participants to learn in a collaborative, teacher-led environment. Meeting once a week for three hours, the inaugural class focused on critical workplace readiness skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and time management.

The program culminated with guaranteed interviews, giving graduates the opportunity to put their training into practice and receive valuable employer feedback.



We extend our warmest congratulations to Steve and Mohammed for their dedication and determination. By investing in themselves, they've demonstrated resilience, growth, and a commitment to building brighter futures.

Mohammed reflected: *"After working remotely since Covid-19 and having frustrations and challenges from the lack of results in my job search process, attending the Ready to Work in-person course really helped me regain my sense of confidence and has jump-started my job search with a guaranteed interview. The individualized job counseling support I received was immeasurable."*

Steve echoed the impact: *"The course was a life changer. Now that I've completed it, I want to continue my journey to better myself. I used to rush through applications or ask others to complete them for me, but through this course I learned to take my time and learn by doing. This is a great program for those who need one-on-one assistance with their job search."*

We are also grateful to our employer partners, community supporters, and the dedicated Ready to Work team who made this inaugural cohort possible. Their collaboration ensures the program continues to serve as a bridge to opportunity for jobseekers in Charlottesville.

The next Ready to Work cohort begins September 5th—and spots are limited! Click [here](#) to register and secure your place.

Whether completed online or in the classroom, Ready to Work equips jobseekers with the skills, confidence, and support needed to succeed in today's workforce.

Congratulations again to Steve and Mohammed—we can't wait to see the impact you'll make!

## Why Connections Matter -- Let's Build Them Over Coffee



Friday Sept. 12th | 9:30-10:30AM

**Coffee & Conversations**

**Workforce Mingle**

A casual gathering of local jobseekers and employers to share and explore opportunities, skills and networking - all over coffee.

**NETWORK 2 WORK**

\*RSVP: [bichej@charlottesville.gov](mailto:bichej@charlottesville.gov)

Charlottesville ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The flyer features a central image of three coffee cups on a tray. The text is arranged in a clean, professional layout with a mix of bold and regular fonts. The event details are clearly stated at the top, and the contact information is at the bottom.

Half of workers say they landed a job through a connection. In fact, personal and professional relationships outrank job boards, social media, recruiters, and cold outreach as the most helpful job-search tools. A recent survey found 54% of workers were hired via a connection; 32% credited personal contacts and 28% cited professional contacts as the biggest difference-makers.

Yet most people don't fully tap their networks: nearly 60% reach out only a few times (or tell just one or two close contacts), another 20% don't tell anyone they're looking, and 21% have never asked for a referral. Even though 70% believe connections beat credentials, many hesitate because they're unsure who to contact, what to say, or worry about bothering someone.

That's exactly what Coffee & Conversations is designed to do—make networking easy, friendly, and useful. Whether you're exploring new job opportunities, recruiting talent, offering workforce services, or simply curious about what's happening in our local labor market, you'll find a relaxed space to meet people, trade insights, and discover opportunities.

Join us at the next Coffee & Conversation event on Friday, Sept. 12 from 9:30–10:30 AM at Piedmont Virginia Community College, North Mall Meeting Room (Main Building), 501 College Drive, Charlottesville. Jobseekers—bring copies of your resume. Employers & organizations—bring business cards to share.

It's our version of a laid-back, mini-job fair—and a practical way to overcome the most common networking barriers. A single conversation can change your search.

The event is free and open to all, but we ask that you RSVP to [bichej@charlottesville.gov](mailto:bichej@charlottesville.gov).

See you there—let's turn connections into opportunities!

## Available Property Spotlight

Next year the City of Charlottesville will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Downtown Mall, and you have the opportunity to position your business on the Downtown Mall today! **534 East Main Street** is offering nearly 10,000 square-feet of

office space for lease along with a limited amount of desirable on-site parking. This property's location puts you and your team right in the heart of Downtown Charlottesville with easy access to unique food and beverage options, specialty retailers, and the City's public transportation hub. Ting Pavilion is only steps away, offering a variety of concerts and events throughout a large portion of the year. Download the **marketing flyer** or reach out to them to learn more about this opportunity and to schedule a visit!



Find information on other available properties in the City of Charlottesville by visiting the Office of Economic Development's "**Sites & Buildings**" webpage. If you have commercial, retail, or industrial space available for lease or sale, let us know by emailing property information and any marketing flyer to [ecodev@charlottesville.gov](mailto:ecodev@charlottesville.gov).

## Time to Refresh Your Marketing Plan

A couple of cool, crisp morning and the smell of pumpkin spice in the air can only mean one thing – the holiday season is almost upon us. For many businesses, this time of year presents numerous opportunities to connect with customers and boost sales. In order to take full advantage of these opportunities you need to have a solid marketing plan.

One of the best ways to start developing a **marketing plan** is revisiting your business plan. Your original concepts and ideas are likely to still be just as relevant today as when you first launched, especially when it comes to methods for reaching your core customer base. Take time to evaluate your target market, competitive advantages and use that information to create a winning marketing strategy.

Another approach you can take is to review and reimagine campaigns and promotions that have worked well in the past. Analyze sales numbers generated during prior campaigns and promotions as the basis for creating a realistic budget for new marketing plans.

When it comes to your sales and marketing strategy, here are a few ideas to consider even beyond the coming months: seasonal promotions, customer appreciation, and community engagement events. Partner with other local businesses and nonprofits to increase your business' visibility. Whichever you choose, just make sure you're reaching your audience on the proper platforms and in the proper spaces, the ones where your customers are most engaged.

Remember, you don't have to do this alone. There are a number of resources available to help along the way. Use a **sample marketing plan** from the Small Business Administration website. If you prefer more interactive support developing or fine-tuning your holiday marketing plan, the **Central Virginia Small Business Development Center** offers free business counseling services to help you succeed. Take the steps today to ensure this fourth quarter your most rewarding.

---

## OED Fun Fact

Today is National Bow Tie Day! Bow ties aren't just for fancy occasions – they're a lifestyle. The history of the bow tie originated with Croatian mercenaries during the Prussian wars of the 17th century. A scarf was worn around the neck to hold together the opening of their shirts. The upper classes in France soon adopted this idea. If you want to look dapper like our own Assistant Director, Matt Johnson, run out to your local men's store (we have one here right on the Downtown Mall) and get your bow tie tied!

---

## Free Business Resources



The Central Virginia Small Business Development Center is a team of business and technical experts available to advise and assist entrepreneurs, confidentially and free of charge. They offer 1:1 assistance, curated research, access to technical experts and professionals, and timely events/training. To see upcoming SBDC events, click [here!](#)

*FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA*



City of Charlottesville Office of Economic Development | 605 E Market St | Charlottesville, VA  
22902 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!