

Google Tries to Organize Gaggle of Entrepreneurs

NETWORKING: Startup Grind program kicks off in the Santa Clarita Valley.

A new group has formed in Santa Clarita in the ongoing effort to bring together a community of tech startups.

James McKinney director of the area chapter of Startup Grind, said the Santa Clarita Valley lacks the same ecosystem found up north in Silicon Valley, in Santa Monica, home of the so-called “Silicon Beach or even in Orange County.

“There is a massive startup community here in Santa Clarita that is just not centralized,” McKinney said.



TECHNOLOGY

Mark R. Madler

Startup Grind is an independent community that partners with **Google Inc.** to connect and educate tech entrepreneurs. It was founded in 2010 and has chapters in more than 100 countries.

The point of the organization is to bring together people who are deep in the grind of running a startup to hear and learn from successful entrepreneurs.

“Hearing from people that show the journey and are farther down the road is extremely helpful,” McKinney said.

The group’s first event takes place Sept. 12 at **Status Not Quo**, 26326 Citrus St. in Valencia. The featured speaker is **Matthew Arevalo**, the co-founder and chief experience officer at **Loot Crate**, a Los Angeles subscription service



Extrovert: James McKinney will lead the Startup Grind chapter in Santa Clarita.

of products for fans of pop culture, gaming, sports and entertainment.

McKinney has been involved with other Startup Grind chapters and his involvement with the startup community the past four or so years made him a natural to head up Santa Clarita’s. He works as vice president of strategic growth for **Status Not Quo**, a Valencia web design and production company.

Powering Smart Homes

A Chinese company that makes connected smart devices is using long-range wireless technology developed by **Semtech Corp.**

The Camarillo developer of analog and

mixed-signal semiconductors said the use of its LoRa technology in the YoSmart devices from **KingTingTech Co. Ltd.** provide homeowners and property managers the ability to control indoor climate and conserve energy.

The YoSmart devices include a thermostat that automatically adjusts the temperature of the climate control equipment in the home according to the homeowner’s preference, a sprinkler, door lock and a smart outlet that allows a person to turn electronic devices on or off remotely from their mobile phones.

Mike Wong, vice president of marketing for Semtech’s wireless and sensing products group, said the LoRa technology works just as well in the home as at great distances.

“It was designed for excellent performance with an emphasis on data security,” Wong said in a prepared statement. “This is what homeowners look for —something that works well and provides protection and peace of mind at accessible price points.”

Makerspace Grants

Three community colleges in the Business Journal’s coverage area received grants from the state to establish maker programs to help students with innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

The California Community College Chancellor’s Office gave out a total of 24 grants between \$100,000 and \$350,000 a year for up to two years. Schools in the area receiving grants were **College of the Canyons** in Valencia, **Glendale College** in Glendale, and **Moorpark College** in Moorpark.

“These 24 colleges have demonstrated their commitment to establishing makerspaces, placing students in internships, developing curriculum that prepares students with 21st century skills and participating in a statewide network of college makerspaces that are tailored to meet

the needs of regional economies,” said **Van Ton-Quinlivan**, California Community Colleges vice chancellor of workforce & economic development, in a prepared statement.

College of the Canyons has two maker spaces, one at its main campus in Valencia that opened in May of last year, and the second at its Canyon Country campus that opened in November. The school received a \$311,432 to enhance its maker spaces with additional equipment, courses, training and internships.

Moorpark College was given a \$250,000 grant for the school year that is renewable for the following year in the same amount. Glendale College received a \$335,687 grant for the current school year to establish a makerspace center in the college’s robotics lab. It is expected to be open by the winter semester.

FloQast’s New Hire

Accounting software developer **FloQast Inc.** has named **Wynn White** to the position of chief marketing officer.

White will oversee all the global marketing initiatives for the Sherman Oaks company to create further awareness and demand for its products.

FloQast is front and center of a dynamic market opportunity with its software, White said.

“Close management software is the future for corporate accounting teams, and FloQast is leading the charge,” he added in a prepared statement.

Prior to joining FloQast, White served as chief marketing officer at **Druva**, a Sunnyvale data protection and governance software company.

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Can Dissolvable Strips Tip the Tuberculosis Scale?

MEDICINE: NIH grant funds research for cost-effective solution to killer disease.

Oak Therapeutics wants to tackle tuberculosis, one strip at a time.

The Oxnard company, which develops pharmaceutical grade oral dissolvable strips, may now be a step closer to fighting the world’s second most common infectious cause of death, with help from a research grant provided by the National Institutes of Health.

The company announced last month that its anti-tuberculosis treatment has completed

Phase 1 of the Small Business Innovation Research Contract from the NIH. The company will now move on to Phase 2, where it will continue research to examine the scalability of the product.

The SBIR program is funded by NIH and the Small Business Administration, in hopes to help small businesses conduct research and devel-



HEALTH CARE & BIOTECH

Iris Lee

opment on products that have a potential for commercialization. In the past, companies such as **Symantec Corp.**, **Qualcomm Inc.** and **Jawbone** have received early stage funding from the program.

Oak Therapeutics is a subsidiary of **Cure Pharmaceuticals**, a company established six years ago by a handful of former employees of **Amgen Inc.** in Thousand Oaks. The company manages its vertically integrated manufacturing plant in Oxnard, where it conducts research on



Curable: Oral strips made by Cure Pharmaceuticals are ready to begin Phase 2.

polymer sciences to develop new drug delivery methods like oral strips.

Cure’s Chief Executive **Robert Davidson** said Oak Therapeutics was created specifically to address public health issues in emerging markets. The oral strips are a better delivery method compared to pills in some parts of the world, he said.

“With oral strips, you don’t need water, which there is a big shortage of in places like Africa,” said Davidson. “We want to attack different indications specific to emerging markets and diseases that are not being looked at efficiently.”

In addition to tuberculosis, the company is also developing oral dissolvable strips for malaria.

Cure has a history of working in international markets. In Asia, the company entered into a distribution partnership for an erectile dysfunction drug, deliverable through an oral strip. In July, the company entered into a research agreement with an Israeli company to research cannabinoid-based drugs in cancer treatment.

“There is an exciting potential there,” said

Davidson. “We are looking at the genetic makeup of the plant itself and at which combination it will be more efficacious against which cancer types.”

West Nile Virus

The heat is rising in the Valley region and so are the mosquitos.

According to the California Health & Safety Department, there have been 10 confirmed human cases of West Nile virus in San Fernando Valley out of 22 confirmed cases in Los Angeles County.

The Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District, a division of the Health & Safety Department, is the agency responsible for tracking and preventing the disease. According to the agency, 49 mosquito samples collected in its jurisdiction tested positive for West Nile Virus in one week. The agency said San Fernando Valley is an area of heightened concern and advised residents to remove sources of standing water in their yards where mosquitos can lay eggs and grow.

“It’s easy to forget insect repellent or ignore standing water,” **Levy Sun**, public information officer at GLACVCD, said in a statement. “But no one forgets when they or a family member becomes sick with West Nile virus.”

While an infection with West Nile virus is often mild, it can cause significant cognitive and neurologic symptoms in some patients.

The agency recommends that residents apply repellents with active ingredients like DEET or Picaridin before outdoor activities.

Biotech Breakfast Talk

California Lutheran University is bringing together leaders in biotech to discuss the industry’s impact in Los Angeles County and how organizations can encourage its growth in the region.

The panelists are comprised of executives from three biotechnology startups in Los Angeles, all from the Valley region.

Kanan Therapeutics Inc. is a Westlake Village development stage biotech company focused on cardiovascular therapies. The company will be represented by **Frank Watanabe**, its chief operating officer, who has worked in organizations like **Eli Lilly & Co.** and **Amgen Inc.**

REMD Biotherapeutics in Camarillo develops biopharmaceuticals for diabetes treatment. The company has raised more than \$60 million to develop antibodies for diabetes. The company will be represented by **Hai Yan**, its founder.

Lastly, the panel will be joined by **ADRx**, a Thousand Oaks biotech focused on new therapies for Alzheimer’s. The company will be represented by Chief Executive **James Treanor**.

The event will be held at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley on Sept. 11.

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