



Small Business Development Center Gannon University

Helping businesses
start, grow, and prosper.



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Holly Masters and Ali Izzo, co-owners
Purpose The Therapeutic
Subscription Box

County: Mercer County

Industry: Retail

Year Founded: 2018

SBDC Assistance:
Marketing, Networking

Consultant: Jill Newcomer

Additional Partners:
eCenter at LindenPointe

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Penn State students want elderly to have a Purpose

Class projects are commonplace in a university setting. Launching a business from an assignment is not. But Holly Masters and Ali Izzo are also not your typical students. After receiving an assignment to come up with a business idea, they naturally came up with developing Purpose: The Therapeutic Subscription Box. Holly and Ali had spent four years working in nursing homes and hospitals for clinicals and noticed that many of the elderly folks did not receive many visitors or even mail. Knowing that receiving mail from their family brightens their day and gives them a sense of purpose, providing this connection was a valuable solution for both the patient and their families.

Family members have several options for the boxes with the most popular being the subscription box. Each is customized towards the recipient's challenges or diagnoses and is mailed on a quarterly basis. For instance, if someone's grandmother is suffering from dementia then the box is complete with large font letter, personalized note and items that would be most useful for this type of diagnosis. The sender provides the photos and Ali/Holly download to include in the frame/gift box. Other options include Thinking of You and Happy Birthday boxes. Whichever one is chosen, Holly and Ali take time to select items tailored to make the recipient smile and feel special.

With the idea well in hand and the business being self-funded, Holly and Ali reached out to the Gannon SBDC for general business assistance. Consulting included creating sample boxes, brochures and a website. The Gannon SBDC also coordinated meetings with local CEO's of nursing/elder care facilities, instrumental in developing additional insight for their product and literature along with a great connection for marketing their product. The CEO's were on board with the concept, product and assisting as best they can. One CEO asked for 500 brochures to place in his facilities as they really thought the idea was on target for many. “Jill has been a great help. She has introduced us to leaders in the nursing/elder care industry in Mercer County which has been a huge step for us and great learning experiences,” Holly said.

Intent on growing the company with little or no debt, Holly and Ali have actively pursued opportunities to fund the business. This spring, Purpose was a winner in two contests. The company was awarded a \$15,000 grant and \$1,000 in printing and other marketing opportunities through FedEx's seventh annual Small Business Grant Contest. Purpose was one of 12 winning businesses selected from among the more than 13,000 businesses that entered.

Purpose also won \$15,000 from WPSU-TV's “The Investment,” a competition modeled on the television series “Shark Tank” that was hosted by the Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP).

“One year ago, Purpose was still in the launching phase. To see our business grow and what we have accomplished in a year has been humbling and extremely rewarding. This has given us further validation in Purpose's mission and proves that hard work and passion pay off,” Holly said.