

For immediate release

Four local businesses take home more than \$130,000 in prizes in FirstOntario's 1Awards local business competition

Today's challenges light a fire under dedicated entrepreneurs

Hamilton ON, May 20, 2021– After an unprecedented year, local businesses were back competing for cash and professional in-kind services as part of FirstOntario Credit Union's 1Awards competition. While 10 worthy finalists pitched about their passion and their success in their work – four walked away as this year's winners.

Hamilton's [Dundurn Market](#), [Monarch Tea Co.](#) and [Mind Your Bees](#) came out on top with Brantford's [Cara & Co. Silicone Craft Supply](#). Each of the 10 presentations was top-notch quality and there were no easy decisions. Winners were awarded cash and in-kind prizes totaling more than \$130,000 thanks to additional support from partners.

"After a brief pause last year due to COVID-19, we felt it was more important than ever to come back and try and help the local businesses that represent our communities," said Joanne Battaglia, FirstOntario's Vice President, Marketing, Communications and Community Partnerships. "Together with our partners, we want to do what we can to put the spotlight on these exceptional businesses that put everything they have into what they do. Their dedication and commitment is inspiring to everyone."

Finalists presented their current business and ideas about future growth, including challenges they've had due to the pandemic. They also showed their care and concern for their communities, something that's a big part of FirstOntario and the 1Awards program. Partners assigned the prizes based on the needs of the businesses.

Dundurn Market believes in supporting the local food economy and community through their store front shop on Dundurn Street. Monarch Tea Co. offers tea sommelier services and virtual tea talks while Mind Your Bees creates beeswax cotton food wraps. Cara & Co. Silicone Supply specializes in silicone and wood beads, teethingers and craft supplies.

The 1Awards is an important way FirstOntario supports local business development. 1Awards partners have invested more than \$1.4 million into Hamilton, Halton, Brant and Niagara's small business landscape. Partners include the Hamilton Spectator, Agro Zaffiro LLP, KPMG, Mohawk College, Giant Shoe Creative and PLAY. Additional supporters are The Thornton Group, Global Payments and the Hamilton, Brantford and Oakville Chambers of Commerce.

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[About FirstOntario Credit Union](#)

FirstOntario is a full service cooperative financial institution, serving Members for 80 years throughout the Golden Horseshoe, Niagara Region and Southwestern regions of Ontario. With \$5.7 billion in assets under management, FirstOntario is one of Canada's largest credit unions. Everyone is welcome to be part of FirstOntario for financial services including daily transactions, mortgages, lines of credit, loans and investments. FirstOntario profits are invested into the communities we serve through support for entrepreneurs, competitive rates and charitable pursuits including our award winning student nutrition program. Learn more about us today at FirstOntario.com.

[Dundurn Market](#)

At Dundurn Market, we believe in supporting our local food economy and community. We are passionate about providing you with the most nutrient-dense, ethically-produced foods that are as local as possible. We are always guided by what's best for the health and wellbeing of our customers, our producers, and the planet we all share. Supporting small farms and local businesses is simply good for the economy and the environment!

[Cara & Co. Silicone Supply Company](#)

At Cara & Co, we're inspiring creativity and endless possibilities, one bead at a time. We're North America's original and largest online silicone craft supplier, specializing in silicone and wood beads, teething and other craft supplies. As a women-led company, we support our customers and other small businesses with quality products, supportive resources and unique DIY tutorials – everything our customer family needs to be a truly creative community! Together, we're crafting a new way forward!

[Mind Your Bees](#)

Mind Your Bees emerged on the green eco-friendly market in mid-2017. Our brand pioneered beeswax cotton food wraps and offer fun, seasonal, organic, prints for every occasion which echo the message that 'green' doesn't mean 'boring' while also laying the foundation for beeswax food wraps to be as commonplace in a modern kitchen as a tea towel. Our products are a simple, beautiful, and sustainable food storage solution which allow users and retail customers to decrease household food and single use plastic waste. This allows our users to increase their positive ecological impact, one wrap at a time.

[Monarch Tea Co.](#)

Katie founded The Monarch Tea Co. in 2014 with the vision of bringing together the traditional eloquence of tea time with a modern twist. Katie is a certified Tea Sommelier through the Tea and Herbal Association of Canada. Her interactive tea talks have been taught worldwide in person and online in homes, at corporate events and places passionate about food and beverage. Katie has had her work published in Tea Time! magazine, UK Tea & Herbal Magazine and spoken at the RBG Tea Festival & Toronto Tea Fest. You can find out more at www.monarchteaco.com and @monarchteaco on Instagram.