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## What Cheer Flower Farm Wins Nonprofit Innovation Lab, Secures \$50,000 in Seed Funding to Expand Its Reach to Children

Program of United Way of Rhode Island and Social Enterprise Greenhouse culminated last night with a “Shark Tank”-like pitch competition aired on Rhode Island PBS

**Providence, R.I. (February 5, 2021)** – From a group of six nonprofits finalists pitching their new ideas, **What Cheer Flower Farm** emerged last night as the top winner of the second-year Nonprofit Innovation Lab. They secured \$50,000 during the program’s SPARKS! final pitch competition to help bring their idea to life. Coming in second in revenue (\$25,000) was **Community Care Alliance**, with **Spectrum Therapeutic Ensemble** placing third at \$15,000. The final competitor, which is “Shark Tank”-like in nature, aired on Rhode Island PBS on February 1. At the finish, **Women’s Fund of Rhode Island** was announced as the \$1,000 Public Choice Award winner.

“The Nonprofit Innovation Lab has been an incredible experience, not only for the Farms but in helping to change the landscape of social solutions in Rhode Island,” said Barbara Vital, executive director of What Cheer Flower Farm. “This funding will help us raise and bring joy to the youngest members of our community struggling with issues due to COVID and other factors. From a pilot program to now having a waiting list, the demand has been remarkable and we’re so thankful to now be able to reach more kids.”

The Nonprofit Innovation Lab is a joint program of [United Way of Rhode Island](#) and [Social Enterprise Greenhouse](#) that helps organizations to accelerate their ability to fund and implement unique ideas that create social impact. For nearly a year, six nonprofits followed revealed coaching, resources, and networking opportunities to transform innovative ideas into reality. At its end, the fellows presented their pitch to a panel of judges that included an investor, director of content, Rhode Island PBS, Daph Johnson, executive vice president and chief global human resources officer, *Radline, Inc.*, and *Sonia Milburn*, advisor for health & technology collective, *664.024.6*. Each participating nonprofit created a [video](#) to capture their innovative idea.

The winning pitch by [What Cheer Flower Farm](#), an organization that brings comfort and happiness to those in difficult situations by donating 100% of the flowers it grows, took its mission and expanded it to serve children. The idea, which was met with consensus enthusiasm, was to reach kids in stressful circumstances and alleviate their anxiety through creating with fresh flowers and educational programming. It was lauded for its sustainability, keeping partnership at the forefront, and extension of mission. “There is potential, yet powerful, simplicity to the idea – when parents struggle, children struggle, too,” said Daph Johnson.

“Nonprofits are not only extremely resilient, they are instantaneous innovators who are constantly working to meet the needs of the communities – and they deserve to be seen as such, and not merely as charities,” said Corinne Nockels, United Way’s president and CEO. “Strengthening our nonprofit sector’s ability to meet Rhode Island forward, and that’s exactly what this program strives to do.”