### **RIVALRY VOLLEYBALL** Nixa senior Aubrey Cheffey leads team to edge Ozark

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## STARTUPS COMPETEFOR CASH, SPACE

Chamber-backed competition Thursday is reminiscent of 'Shark Tank'



From left, Chris Allen, Robb Woolsey, Jim Carr and Jason Klein.

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#### THOMAS GOUNLEY TGOUNLEY@NEWS-LEADER.COM

he feedback ranged from general tips about Microsoft PowerPoint — less text on the slides, please — to requests for additional information specific to each startup. Where did that estimate of potential market share come from? Can you address how you differ from your competitors a little more?

Friday afternoon, representatives of four local companies gathered at the eFactory on North Jefferson Avenue. They'd all been chosen to participate in the second annual Go BIG Pitch Competition, hosted by the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with the city and eFactory. This was their second and final practice session with members of the business community before the "Shark Tank"-style competition Thursday.

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Chris Allen discusses Covy Friday during a practice round for the Go BIG Pitch Competition. Four startups are competing for \$5,000, as well as co-working space.



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"Each finalist will have seven minutes to their company, pitch their idea," Chamber **Business Assistance Co**ordinator Danny Perches said of the setup of the Thursday event. "They'll go through everything from the problem they're addressing, revenue model, the structure of the company, the actual product or concept. And after their seven-minute pitch, the judges have the opportunity to ask any follow-up questions."

The winner of the competition, which will take place during a luncheon at the chamber's B2B Expo, will receive \$5,000, as well as three months access to the Originate co-working space at the eFactory. Weeks ago, a review team narrowed down the original 20 applicants to the four startups that will be making their pitch Thursday:

» Covy is an app that helps manage the scheduling and use of common areas, with a current focus on co-working spaces. The platform can also be used a checkin kiosk, notifying individuals at a company, for example, that they have a visitor at the front desk. The startup is being pitched by Chris Allen.





of that will come from the \$50 per location per month that restaurants pay for the service. Klein is the founder of Internet hosting and network consulting company Datility Networks.

» Rural First provides GPS fleet tracking for first responders and commercial fleets, and the company has done its own GIS mapping so as to provide customers the best knowledge of rural areas, CEO Robb Woosley said. The company brought on its first customers in May 2014 and currently earns about \$60,000 a year in recurring revenue, Woosley said; that's expected to increase in the coming months.

Prior to making Rural First his full-time job, Woosley worked in sales and account management roles in the telecommunications industry and owned several small businesses.

» EmergencMe is an online platform that allows users to store information that they would want accessible in the case of an emergency, as well as to report potential emergency situations they encounter in their daily lives. The company expects to offer its basic service for free, with charges for premium, founder Jim Carr said. Beta testing is expected to begin in the coming weeks, with a county-by-county rollout next year.

Carr founded and later sold Carr Industries in Lebanon. He now runs Mayhem Development and has been working on EmergencMe since the beginning of this year.

» Logic Forte organizes data from multiple sources in a central online dashboard. The company has so far focused on the restaurant industry, allowing customers to work to increase profits by, say, analyzing labor costs or identifying locations that have a high amount of food waste.

The company's dashboard is currently used by 290 locations in 19 states, according to CEO founder Jason Klein, and Logic Forte expects to see revenue of about \$175,000 this year. Most Judges for the Thursday competition will be SELF Interactive owner Charlie Rosenbury, Mexican Villa chief operating officer and City Councilwoman Phyllis Ferguson and Ceramex North America CEO Steve Crowder. The four companies will be assigned a score in five equally weighted categories:

» Validity (Is this a real and possible venture?)

» Presentation (Did they clearly explain the idea, the value proposition, financials, etc.?)

» Team (Has the appropriate team been assembled or identified to execute?)

» Investment quality (Hypothetically, how likely would you be to invest your personal funds in this venture?)

» Responsiveness (Was the presenter knowledgeable and articulate outside the scripted presentation?)

"These four are going to be really successful, regardless of the outcome," Perches said. "They're going to get some great exposure in the community, and it's going to raise that awareness of how really thriving the entrepreneurship community is here in Springfield."