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Downtown Alliance Awards \$10,000 Digital Innovation Grants to Two Lower Manhattan Businesses



B & Co Robert Garber (left photo) and Boundless Plains Owner Jo Black (right photo) accept \$10,000 grant prize from (l-r) Downtown Alliance's President Jessica Lappin and Director of Storefront Engagement Heather Ducharme.

NEW YORK (July 24, 2019) – The Alliance for Downtown New York awarded both B & Co NYC and Boundless Plains with \$10,000 grants to improve their online presence as part of the organization's second annual Downtown Digital Innovation Grant program.

"From local lunch spots to the trusted corner coffee shop, small businesses fuel Lower Manhattan physically and emotionally, but many are challenged by the digital shift in consumer behavior," said Downtown Alliance President Jessica Lappin. "To help relieve the burden this creates and help them prosper, we've created a digital grant program to support local shops like B & Co and Boundless Plains Espresso compete online."

B & Co, formerly known as Bits and Bites (22 Park Place), is a modern spin on the New York deli. Featuring an extensive menu of fresh sandwiches and salads available for breakfast and lunch, the deli caters to the neighborhood's work crowds with delivery and order-in options. B & Co plans on using the grant to modernize their website with a mobile-friendly update.

"Our cafe opened in 1997," said B & Co founder Robert Garber. "When we started serving Lower Manhattan, our business came from walk-ins and calls. It's hard for a small business like ours to adapt to new technologies. With so many people ordering lunch with a tap of their phone, this grant will allow us to build a mobile-friendly website and meet our customers where they are."

Boundless Plains Espresso (19 Rector Street) is run by local resident by way of Australia Jo Black, who opened the shop to bring a bit of her homeland's coffee scene to Lower Manhattan.

The shop serves high-quality espresso, cappuccinos and lattes with the Australian-preferred ratio of coffee-to-milk, alongside a menu that includes avocado toast, overnight oats and organic salads. Boundless Plains plans to use their grant to develop their own online ordering and delivery platform, a social media strategy to raise awareness of the shop, and to educate staffers on how they can best engage new customers online.

“At the coffee shop, we pride ourselves on building a community among staff and guests,” said Boundless Plains Espresso owner Jo Black. “The Downtown Digital Innovation Grant will allow us to use online connections to help bring people together face-to-face in the store, and allow my business, and community, to grow with improvements I wouldn't otherwise have been able to afford.”

Martin Busch Jewelers received the inaugural grant in 2018. A neighborhood mainstay for more than 50 years, the store started as small booth on William Street before moving to their current location on John Street in 1972. The women-owned and operated family business used their \$10,000 winnings to improve their website, and grow their Facebook and Instagram presence. Each platform now features professional photos that allow them to showcase their all of their inventory and has made it easier for customers to shop the store's goods online. As a result, traffic to the Martin Busch website has increased by almost 50 percent in the last year.

The Downtown Digital Innovation Grant was created by the Alliance in 2018 as a way to assist Lower Manhattan businesses, within the BID boundaries, to compete in today's changing retail marketplace. Applications were evaluated on the store's need, capacity to execute as well as on the creativity and clarity of how the efforts would attract more customers and increase profits. The Alliance has previously created several grant initiatives to support local businesses in the neighborhood.

The mission of the Alliance for Downtown New York is to provide service, advocacy, research and information to advance Lower Manhattan as a global model of a 21st century Central Business District for businesses, residents and visitors. The Downtown Alliance manages the Downtown-Lower Manhattan Business Improvement District (BID), serving an area roughly from City Hall to the Battery, from the East River to West Street. For more information visit www.downtownny.com

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