

IDEA INCUBATOR

Jane Muir, the director of the Innovation Hub, has been part of the startup community for almost two decades. "It's been an amazing journey," she said.

The map on the second floor shows the locations of visitors who have toured the space. People from Ireland, South Africa and Australia have all visited.



AN ECOSYSTEM FOR TECHNOLOGY STARTUPS, WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURS

Success Through Innovation

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY MONICA HUMPHRIES

► Fatma Kaplan would not be in business without the Innovation Hub.

As the CEO of Pheronym Inc., a biotech company developing green solutions for agricultural pest control using pheromone technology, she and her team have taken advantage of the Innovation Hub, a startup incubator where companies can collaborate and grow using different resources.

"We knew we needed some lab space and office space to really take off," Kaplan said. "But we didn't expect the mentorships that we gained."

The Innovation Hub is more than a building with cheap rent, said Jane Muir, the director of the Innovation Hub. If accepted into the program, companies are provided with an array of different resources. The startups have access to everything

from University of Florida libraries and databases to conference rooms, mentors and events.

The startups also have access to intellectual property law firms, accounting firms and branding firms at discounted rates.

"We don't talk about a building," Muir said. "We talk about a program."

In order to be a part of the Innovation Hub, the startups have to be technology based, capable of creating jobs in the community, and willing to participate. The companies do not have to be UF affiliated.

With 44 offices and 22 labs, the Innovation Hub is home to medical devices, mobile apps, satellite companies and "everything else in between," Muir said.

Shadow Health is one of the Innovation Hub's biggest success stories.

The company uses an avatar to teach nurses and other health care professionals how to improve patient outcomes.



Equipment, like this sterilizer (above), is often too expensive for startups to purchase. The Innovation Hub provides equipment so the startups can dedicate all their time and funding to the company. The current Innovation Hub has 22 labs and 44 offices. The new addition (artist's rendering shown below) will double that size.

Muir describes how a lobby area is key in any incubator. Having smart conversations helps promote smart ideas. The lobby area includes a mural that represents various discoveries found through UF research funding.



Shadow Health was one of the first companies in the space. It started with two employees, and within 10 months, had grown to 24 employees.

Shadow Health graduated from the Innovation Hub and moved into an empty hardware building downtown. Since then, the company has grown to over 65 employees.

"That's kind of the type of story we want to replicate over and over again," she said.

But one of the biggest challenges startups come across is funding.

"I would say the top three challenges for startups are cash, cash and more cash," Muir said.

The Innovation Hub's strong reputation has helped create funding, Muir said. Within the first three and a half years, over \$50 million was generated in private investments.

Another way startups save money is through mentorships.

"If you can learn from other people's mistakes, it'll take you less money and less time to get to market," Muir said.

The idea for the Innovation Hub originated when Muir was the associate director for the Office of Technology and Licensing, which reviews and decides what technologies to patent.

There's over \$700 million worth of research that goes on at UF, which makes it one of the top research universities in the country. And for every \$2 to \$2.5 million of research, a new discovery will occur, Muir said.

Since her office worked with startups, they were looking at the possibility of building another incubator in the Gainesville area, Muir said.

Muir learned about funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration that focused on creating disaster-resistant jobs. Florida's economy is based in tourism and agriculture, and when a hurricane or natural disaster hits, a lot

of those jobs are lost.

Technology jobs are disaster resistant, so Muir used that funding to help build the Innovation Hub.

"That's what started it all," she said.

The Innovation Hub opened its doors in October 2011 with an \$8 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and a \$5 million contribution from UF. Every year, the Innovation Hub has 15 to 20 startups based on research from the university.

Because of demand, and the success of the Innovation Hub, Muir wrote another grant and received \$8 million from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and a \$9 million contribution from the university three and a half years after the opening.

"Obviously UF wouldn't have done that if they weren't happy with the results," Muir said.

The 48,000-square-foot building will be adding 50,000 square feet, which will be finished in December 2017.

This addition will be structured a little differently. Muir and her team noticed that as companies would grow, they would be scattered throughout the building. The new facility will be more of a transition space where offices and labs will be together.

"The companies will be able to be connected as a company, which will improve their corporate culture," Muir said.

The goal is to build lots a flexibility, which will include demountable walls and transition spaces. So when the companies grow, their office space will grow with them.

Currently, the building can hold anywhere from 25 to 40 companies, depending on the size of the startups. With the new expansion, this number will only increase.

"Clearly we will be able to at least double the amount of companies we're working with," she said.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN TECHNOLOGY STARTUPS

The program all started when Muir realized she was continually one of the few people wearing a skirt.

Muir said she noticed a gap at the Innovation Hub's grand opening ceremony.

"I invited the CEOs to lunch with the Assistant Secretary of Commerce in D.C., and as they were introducing themselves, I realized it was all men," she said.

Her team got together and brainstormed what they could do to change the paradigm.

That's when they came up with the Empowering Women in Technology Startups (EWITS) 10-week program.

"Our goal is to foster greater inclusion of women in the entire innovation life cycle," she said.

Beyond learning the key components of a startup, the program discusses barriers to entry for women in technology. Engrained gender bias, lack of self-confidence and absence of role models are just a few topics addressed throughout the program.



"Our goal is to foster greater inclusion of women in the entire innovation life cycle."

Over 250 women have gone through the program, and the response has been tremendous.

After the 10-week program, each woman completes a survey on her experience.

The most common response has been "it changed my life," Muir said. "We know from those open-ended questions that we're making a difference."

Muir spends her Sundays on the tennis court. One day, a woman came up and introduced herself. She had gone through the EWITS program and described how the program shaped her life.

She was a neurobiologist, who went on to get her MBA and was in the process of starting a therapeutics company.

"Those are the kinds of fun anecdotal stories we're looking for," she said.

The next step is the continuation of resources when women begin launching their companies. So they created the Collaboratory for Women Innovators, which will open December 2017. The goal is to create a holistic plan for overcoming barriers of entry and changing the paradigm.

Research shows that when you have women and men working together in companies, the overall profitability, morale and turn on investment are greater, Muir said.

"The bottom line is not that it's just a moral imperative but an economic imperative," Muir said.



PARK PLACE CARWASH DETAIL & TINT

**FULL and SELF-SERVICE WASH
TINTING SPECIALISTS**





— Car Wash & Detail 352-331-5588 • Tint 352-331-1783 —

Tower Center • 7404 NW 4th Blvd • Monday - Saturday 8am-6pm, Sun 9am-5pm
www.parkplacecarwash.com

\$5 OFF Superior Car Wash (Full-Service)

Most vehicles. Some restrictions may apply. Coupon required. May not be combined with other coupons or offers. Expires 8-31-17.

\$30 OFF Before Noon!

MON - THURS ANY FULL-SERVICE WASH

Most vehicles. Some restrictions may apply. Coupon required. May not be combined with other coupons or offers. Expires 8-31-17.

CELEBRATION OF INNOVATION

This past April, the Office of Licensing and Technology celebrated its 11th Annual Celebration of Innovation. At the event, 12 startups pitched their business ideas, the entrepreneur and inventor of the year were awarded, and a panel of guests presented on the life cycle of innovation.

Muir said the point of the celebration was to give their startup companies exposure.

Stephen Gatto, chairman and CEO of Entrinsic Health Solutions, was named the 2017 Entrepreneur of the Year. His experience in entrepreneurship, commercialization of bio-based products and his history of having founded several successful companies was celebrated at the event.

Gatto had worked with the UF's Office of Technology and Licensing for 25 years. Beyond that, he was the founder, chairman and CEO of Myriant Corp., which was the first renewable chemicals company in North America to manufacture and commercialize bio-succinic acid.

At the event, Nicholas Muzyczka was named Inventor of the Year for his work in gene therapy. He is a professor of microbiology and the Edward R. Koger Eminent Scholar for Cancer Research at UF.

Kaplan and her team were one of the groups to pitch at the celebration. She said she could remember attending the event as a visitor to learn more about the hub. One year later, her business was not only housed in the Innovation Hub but also pitching at the celebration. The networking from that event helped the company earn funding from Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund.

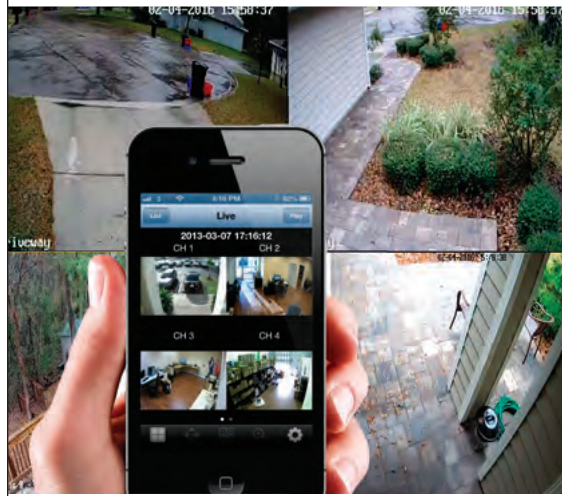
"I never expected something like that," she said. "That's been my favorite memory with the Innovation Hub so far."

"We have people who come in from other parts of the country because they recognize the quality of our startup companies," Muir said.

Muir emphasized the importance of networking at events like this. Before this year, companies that presented at the showcase have brought in over \$500 million in private investment capital.

"We wanted to bring the community together around the whole idea of innovation," she said. **OT**

Securing Peace of Mind for Your Connected Lifestyle



Commercial & Residential

- Security Systems
- Camera Surveillance
- Access Control
- Medical Alert
- Low Monthly Service Rates



Call to schedule your free security review.

We Know That Securing Your Home or Business is Very Important to You



ConnectSmart Systems
Security to go!

www.connectsmartsystems.com
352-575-1327

Licensed #EG13000433 + Insured



Artwalk
Gainesville



Artwalk Gainesville features Galleries, Artist's Studios, Artist Guilds, Cooperatives, Performance Art, Live Music in Various Styles, Theatre, Cinema, Murals, Artesian Breweries, Bars, Restaurants, Coffee shops and so much more. **Last Friday of each month.**
More info @ artwalkgainesville.com



This event is funded in part by the City of Gainesville Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department