Meet the Entrepreneur: Amanda Allen Discusses emocha, Baltimore and FastForward

emocha Mobile Health was one of the first tenants at FastForward East when it opened in 2015. Two years later, it became one of the first startups to move into Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures’ newest innovation hub, FastForward 1812.

As a FastForward tenant, emocha has added clients from Baltimore to Australia for its mobile health platform that connects patients to health care providers and helps solve problems such as medication adherence, linkage to care and patient engagement.

It played a key role in the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s monitoring of Ebola during the outbreak in 2015. This past August, emocha secured contracts for its medication adherence mobile application from three California counties that have some of the highest rates of latent tuberculosis in the country. They’re now using the same technology for hepatitis C and opioid addiction therapy.

Continued on page 7
For more than 140 years, Johns Hopkins has brought the benefits of discovery to the world, most notably by pioneering breakthroughs that prevent, detect and treat disease. This culture of innovation is a point of pride for our institution, as it has positively impacted countless lives. Now, we’re endeavoring to unlock more of our potential in order to revitalize Baltimore’s economy by focusing on bringing products and technologies to market.

Since 2012, startups based on Johns Hopkins technologies have raised more than $1.1 billion in follow-on funding, but 85 percent of that has left Maryland. In 2013, Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures (JHTV), the commercialization arm of the University, set out to rewrite this story. We canvassed innovation ecosystems across the country to understand how they developed startups into sustainable businesses.

The three common resources in each ecosystem—affordable space, support services including mentorship, and funding opportunities—have all been integrated into the fabric of JHTV’s efforts and have produced early returns in the development and retention of job-producing, revenue-generating startups.

These are some of the Hopkins programs that are contributing to Baltimore’s emergence as the next great startup destination:
Establish Startup Roots

Entrepreneurship presents challenges that can derail even the most promising startups. With three innovation hubs strategically located across Baltimore, our FastForward program provides affordable access to 40,000 square feet of office, co-working and lab space, equipment, experienced mentors, legal and accounting services and opportunities to network with investors. This allows startups to skip time-consuming searches for office space and investments in expensive lab equipment, and to focus on their company’s value drivers.

Emocha, a mobile health platform, became one of the first tenants at our FastForward East innovation hub because, as CEO Sebastian Seiguer said, the space, resources and connections kept the startup competitive. Less than three years after its inception, Emocha has customers from as close as Baltimore city and as far as Australia.

Providing high-potential startups like Emocha with the resources and connections they need to succeed gives them an incentive to set roots and grow in our city.

Encourage Social Entrepreneurship

Not all success is determined solely by numbers on a balance sheet. Many entrepreneurs have a mission greater than dollars and cents, and that’s especially true for social entrepreneurs. Our Social Innovation Lab (SIL) brings change to Baltimore and beyond through the development of nonprofit and mission-driven ventures.

While an MBA student at the Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, J.J. Reidy used the funding, mentorship, space and valuable connections SIL provides to grow Urban Pastoral, an agricultural development firm that aims to revitalize Baltimore through urban farming. It has, as one example, transformed shipping containers into vertical farms that provide access to fresh foods to people living in Baltimore’s food deserts and create jobs in neighborhoods with high rates of unemployment.

Embedded at the Impact Hub, a socially focused accelerator unaffiliated with Johns Hopkins, SIL gives teams opportunities to collaborate with, learn from and build connections with like-minded entrepreneurs. Reidy called SIL’s introduction to Baltimore’s social entrepreneurial ecosystem the most beneficial aspect of the program.

Empower Students

Param Shah hasn’t yet completed his junior year at Johns Hopkins University, but he, through Fusiform, the company he co-founded with recent Johns Hopkins alumnus Alex Mathews, is poised to revolutionize manufacturing. Shah’s team has developed middleware that connects 3D scanners and 3D printers and points to a future where custom fabricating products is as viable as mass manufacturing.

Through generous gifts from Johns Hopkins alumni, our student startups receive capital and mentorship to navigate their dorm room venture into future enterprise. One such opportunity is the Ralph S. O’Connor Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Fund, which seeds student ventures, introduces them to investors and provides mentorship from alumni entrepreneurs.

Another opportunity, the JHU Undergraduate Summer Entrepreneurship Fund, helped Fusiform carry the momentum they built during the school year through summer break. This enabled them to develop prototypes, get their products into clinics and land Shah and Mathews on Forbes’ 30 Under 30 list.

Collaboration Cultivates Innovation

The world of business is competitive, but creating a culture of innovation benefits from collaboration. We, like most of the accelerators, incubators, universities and other organizations focused on entrepreneurship in Maryland, rely on the strengths of others.

Many of the programs we value and deploy, like I-Corps, support entrepreneurs from neighboring universities, and a number of our startups work out of non-Hopkins innovation hubs that have resources better suited to their sector. This cooperative activity provides all of our city’s startups the support they need and helps revitalize our city, region and state, not just Johns Hopkins.

Looking Forward

Through investments in traditional and social innovation, Johns Hopkins aims to build upon its rich history of breakthroughs. Not only does this help people live longer, healthier lives; it empowers entrepreneurs to better their communities and to change the world. By making Baltimore a more appealing place to seed and sustain a startup, we foresee a reimagined Baltimore skyline dotted with the names of successful, scalable businesses that were grown right here.
Maryland Startups Sweep Finals at National Competition

A national field of about five dozen shrunk to 16 and then to four, and by that point only Maryland teams remained. It may sound like a hometown fan’s March Madness basketball bracket, but that’s the outcome at the Association of University Technology Manager’s (AUTM) national business plan competition.

AUTM officials selected the finalists as part of a blind panel process, and, on March 14, LifeSprout claimed the top prize of $10,000 at the Pitch and Play Venture Challenge, edging out fellow Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures (JHTV) startups Pathovax and Multisensor Diagnostics and University of Maryland startup Grip Boost.

“Winning the AUTM competition is terrific. It is a validation of our team’s efforts to build something of great value for patients, partners and investors,” LifeSprout CEO Sashank Reddy says.

“It is also a validation of the great work of JHTV, TEDCO and the Abell Foundation in supporting local startups. It is no accident that three of the final four teams in this national business plan competition were from JHTV and all four had TEDCO support.”

LifeSprout is developing a suite of minimally invasive products that can be used to restore missing soft tissues, particularly for those who lost soft tissue due to cancer surgery or as a result of trauma. The award money will allow the company to scale up the manufacturing of its composites as it looks toward clinical trials.

“The VC panel has been asking me how we help our startups,” says JHTV’s Technology Transfer Director Hassan Naqvi, who attended the event. “They are very impressed with the quality of the business plans going into the session.”

“This success is a testament to the work and drive of the startup companies in the competition as well as proof positive of Christy Wyskiel’s vision and Brian Stansky’s translation of that vision into FastForward,” Naqvi continues, referring to the head of JHTV and its director of FastForward, respectively.

Sonavex, a JHTV startup currently operating out of FastForward Homewood, won the competition in 2015, and the success of one could have played a role in what happened this year.

“When someone sees someone else be successful, there’s an ‘If they can do it, I can do it,’” Stansky tells The Daily Record. “You’re thickening the soup in which things can come together and grow.”

Here’s an overview of each of the finalists:

**Multisensor Diagnostics:** Based in Baltimore’s Hampden neighborhood, Multisensor Diagnostics is developing a portable handheld device designed to quickly and easily gather an individual’s key vital signs. CEO: Sathya Elumalai

**Pathovax:** A startup leasing shared lab space at the FastForward 1812 innovation hub, Pathovax is developing a universal HPV vaccine. The pilot pipeline vaccine promises to provide protection against all 15 oncogenic HPV types and many others that cause warts. Earlier this year, Pathovax won the 43North startup competition and $500,000. Co-founders: Weijie Poh, Joshua Wang

**Grip Boost:** A part of UM Ventures, Grip Boost has developed a chemically modified grip solution for football gloves and other sport grips that is legal and easy to use. It currently sells grip products for football, baseball, softball and golf.

JHTV Inventor Portal

Got an invention?

Submitting your invention disclosure is now easier than ever. Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures’ user-friendly, simplified electronic portal includes fewer questions and forms, making invention disclosures less complex and time-consuming. Anyone with a JHED identification account can access the portal.

For questions or support, contact Tina Preston at 410-223-1735.
Innovation is embedded into Johns Hopkins’ DNA. Since 1876, the institution has used discovery to benefit countless lives, most notably by pioneering breakthroughs that prevent, detect and treat disease. We take immense pride in what our researchers and clinicians have accomplished, but Baltimore has not fully felt the economic benefits of this innovation.

Since 2012, startups based on Johns Hopkins technologies have raised more than $1.1 billion in follow-on funding, but 85 percent of that has left Maryland. In 2013, Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures set out to rewrite this story through, among other efforts, the platform of FastForward. This program encourages early-stage ventures to start and stay in Baltimore by providing affordable space, services and funding opportunities.

For the past three years, FastForward has seen strong early returns from its efforts. The doors to our first innovation hub, FastForward Homewood, opened in 2013 near the Johns Hopkins University campus and has operated at capacity ever since. The FastForward East innovation hub opened on the Johns Hopkins medical campus in 2015 and has served as the headquarters for a number of successful startups. Due to the success of and demand for these two spaces, we opened our third innovation hub, FastForward 1812, this year.

This 23,000-square-foot space, also on the Johns Hopkins medical campus, more than doubles our footprint in the city. Its hub space features private offices, co-working desks, state-of-the-art conferencing and meeting spaces, and access to legal, accounting and fundraising experts. It also offers a BSL2 lab space – from benches in a large shared lab to small, medium and large private labs, along with cell culture, microscopy and cold storage rooms, and an assortment of other shared scientific instruments and equipment.

“FastForward allowed us to get up and running quickly,” says Brian Halak, President and CEO of WindMIL, a FastForward 1812 startup developing cell therapies for oncology indications. “It has the infrastructure that allows a brand new company like ours to work on the things that will generate value without worrying about vital, but less directly value-generating activities like finding office space, ordering lab equipment and the like.”

From finding affordable space and equipment to navigating unfamiliar legal and accounting procedures to securing funding, entrepreneurship presents challenges that derail startups based on even the most promising technologies. Sebastian Seiguer, CEO of emocha, a mobile health platform headquartered at FastForward 1812, says FastForward’s space, resources and connections have kept the startup competitive. Less than three years after its inception, emocha has customers from Baltimore to Australia. “The Tech Ventures team offers tremendous support, while giving us the space to grow at our own pace,” Seiguer says. “We have what we need to succeed and to ramp up our business with the FastForward community as our base. This has included great introductions to our seed investors on the West Coast, New York and Boston.”

The support that FastForward provides high-potential startups like WindMIL and emocha not only accelerates the commercialization of life-changing technologies; it helps startups establish roots and grow in Baltimore. This, in turn, creates jobs and revenue for Baltimore. Additionally, as more and more companies start and stay in Baltimore, investors will take notice of the city’s burgeoning innovation ecosystem, creating a virtuous cycle of startup support leading to the commercialization of innovative technologies and the emergence of Baltimore as a leading hub for biohealth innovation.
Acute Kidney Injury: A Startup’s Solution for This Silent Killer

A disturbing fact stuck with Aaron Chang throughout his rotation in cardiac surgery. On average, 15 percent of cardiac surgeries result in acute kidney injury (AKI), a condition which greatly impacts life expectancy. Even more disturbing, patients who sustain a stage 1 kidney injury, the least severe of the three stages before kidney failure, become 2.2 times more likely to die within five years.

“Acute kidney injury is the silent killer nobody talks about,” says Chang, a 2015 master’s graduate of the Johns Hopkins School of Biomedical Engineering.

In addition to their serious health detriments, acute kidney injuries drive up health care costs, as patients who suffer stage 1, 2 or 3 kidney injuries typically spend an extra 3.5 days in the ICU.

The rate of acute kidney injuries is so high, Chang says, because doctors can’t adequately identify the optimal blood pressure for individuals during surgery, a level that varies based on patient size, fitness, medical history and many other variables. The current gold standard of care in detecting AKI is observing a rise in serum creatinine, a blood biomarker, but this doesn’t happen until 24 to 48 hours after the injury has occurred.

“In cardiac surgery, doctors rely on generalized guidelines to set people’s blood pressure, but every person is different,” Chang says. “If these guidelines don’t fit the individual, the patient’s kidneys essentially hold their breath for the entire one- to three-hour procedure. There’s currently no way to see in real time how the kidneys are doing during surgery.”

Chang founded Renalert in 2015 to develop a real-time urine analysis device for the prevention of acute kidney injury. Currently operating out of Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures’ (JHTV) FastForward 1812 innovation hub, Renalert’s device sits beneath operating tables and monitors patient urine in real time, providing more precise measurements than the visual analyses typically used, while also incorporating additional correlations to other real-time vital signs.

A recent 30-patient pilot study Chang organized at Johns Hopkins Hospital showed observational significance between low urine flow during surgery and higher rates of acute kidney injuries.

“If doctors knew of potential injury earlier, there’s plenty of ways they could ensure the patient’s kidneys are perfused,” Chang says. “If at a certain blood pressure no urine is coming out, the doctor would know to increase it.”

With more studies currently underway at Johns Hopkins Hospital and Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Chang hopes to optimize the device’s algorithm and validate these results.

Chang has also begun discussions with Johns Hopkins’ Technology Innovation Center to allow Renalert’s device to feed information into EPIC, Johns Hopkins’ integrated medical record system, to uncover other potential areas where Renalert could improve outcomes. After initial analyses, Chang has identified orthopaedics, liver transplants and minimally invasive surgeries as potential areas to examine.

Renalert’s efforts have received support from the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation, TEDCO’s Maryland Innovation Initiative and the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Dean’s Faculty Innovation Award.

Though his vision for Renalert is clear, navigating the startup landscape is challenging. That’s why he has sought the support of JHTV, which provides Baltimore-area startups with the resources they need to reach their potential.

In addition to FastForward 1812’s proximity to the hospital, the support Renalert received in licensing technology, setting up a corporation correctly and building relationships with potential investors has made Baltimore an attractive place for the startup.

“FastForward provides pro bono legal services, connections with investors and affordable space in a beautiful building on the Johns Hopkins medical campus,” Chang says.
Meet the Entrepreneur  
*Continued from page 1*

Below, Amanda Allen, emocha’s design lead, discusses the startup’s mission, recent successes, support from FastForward and the strengths of Baltimore (which includes delicious pizza).

**In five words, what does your company do?**

Mobile health for public health.

**What’s one success that emocha has had that you’re particularly proud of?**

We started working with Puerto Rico’s Tuberculosis Control Program a few months ago, and their feedback has been extremely positive. I hung up a direct quote in our office: “This has been a god send and has changed the way we operate. You guys are at the forefront of how technology improves health care.”

For context, health departments have a mandate to watch patients take every dose of their TB medication. Every day, for a six- to nine-month period, health officials drive to patients, or ask patients to come into the clinic. This is called Directly Observed Therapy (DOT). While this method is highly effective, it’s extremely burdensome and expensive to scale.

Emocha offers a digital solution. A mobile app allows a patient to video themselves taking their medication at their convenience. Health care workers then log into emocha on their desktop and review videos at their convenience, dramatically reducing the time and money that is poured into observing each patient in-person. This solution is a big deal for Puerto Rico because 30 to 50 percent of their active TB population is unable to access care and dies each year. This situation is compounded by Puerto Rico’s debt, which is currently over $70 billion.

**What are emocha’s goals, and how do you plan to reach them?**

Each product has a specific goal (increase medication adherence, monitor an outbreak, link more patients to care in less time), but at a high level, we aim to create technology that solves real problems in public health. We do this through a hybrid of research, design and engineering.

I think one of the reasons we’re successful is because we hold the user experience paramount. As design lead, I try to make sure every interface is easy to understand and enjoyable to use, regardless of a user’s age, location and technical savvy. We do this by engaging patients, healthcare workers and providers early on in the design process. One-on-one interviews, focus groups, direct observation and other interactive design exercises ensure we’re solving the right problem in the right way.

**In terms of startups and innovation, what's one thing that separates Baltimore from other tech hotbeds?**

Baltimore is a mid-sized city that offers a diverse range of neighborhoods and people. I rarely want to leave, but when I do, I like having access to larger nearby cities. On top of this, cost of living is fairly inexpensive. Baltimore is a hidden gem, my only fear is that word gets out.

**What has been the best part about the FastForward 1812 innovation hub so far?**

Every product we develop has a clinical champion that guides our understanding of the problem we’re trying to solve. FastForward’s location within the medical campus allows us to meet more often with the world-renowned experts we work with in HIV, Hepatitis C and Tuberculosis.

I also enjoy the physical co-working space. I usually start my day in our office, but work in huddle spaces and phone booths the rest of the day for a change of scenery.

**How has FastForward/Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures helped emocha grow?**

Emocha was invented by clinicians and researchers at Johns Hopkins in 2008, and Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures helped us license the technology in 2013. They also provided access to the DreamIT Health Accelerator which was instrumental to our start.

Since then, they’ve continued to make introductions to customers and thought leaders in healthcare.

**What book are you currently reading?**

“The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer” by Siddhartha Mukherjee

**What innovator do you look up to? Why?**

I think I’m most impressed by social entrepreneurs getting by through sheer will power, hustle. They’re usually determined to solve a problem their deeply connected to.

I’ve met two recently who are a part of FastForward’s Social Innovation Lab. Brittany Young is providing a pipeline from dirt biking to STEM jobs through her nonprofit B360, and Shantell Roberts is working to eliminate SIDS by providing an innovative safe sleep solution called a Portable Alternative Cribs (P.A.C.s). Watch out for them.

**It’s after a long day of work, and you don’t feel like cooking. What is your go-to Baltimore restaurant?**

Lebanese Taverna. But if I’m extra lazy, I order chicken tiki marsala pizza from Charles Restaurant and Carry Out. Look it up. You’re welcome.

**What’s your favorite nonwork-related thing to do in Baltimore?**

I joke that hobbies are for people who don’t like their jobs. But I do enjoy Baltimore’s vibrant bar scene. I like to bring everyone I love together at brunch as often as possible.
Good News: LifeSprout wins Crab Trap and AUTM competitions; Baltimore among top 20 ‘Next in Tech’ cities; B360 using dirt bikes to teach STEM to Baltimore youth; PGDX awarded SBIR contract from National Cancer Institute

Features:

In an interview with Engine, Social Innovation Lab Director Darius Graham described Baltimore’s growing innovation ecosystem, the challenges facing Baltimore entrepreneurs, the unique features of the city’s startup community and support from local government.

Param Shah and Alex Mathews founded Fusiform to build orthotics devices that could be 3D-printed and soon recognized they needed to build a whole pipeline. Technical.ly Baltimore profiles how their journey has led them to create a second startup called FactoryFour.

Brittany Young grew up in West Baltimore watching dirt bike riders and has seen how the riders’ and spectators’ passion for the hobby translates into knowledge of mechanics. That’s why she has set up B360, a Social Innovation Lab venture that aims to use dirt bikes to teach STEAM.

Every year, millions of people suffer soft tissue damage from trauma, aging or surgery. LifeSprout, a startup comprised of Johns Hopkins plastic surgeons and scientists, are developing a better way to repair this damage and make patients whole again.

A team of artists, neurologists and engineers that comprise the KATA Design Group have set out to use video games to aid the recovery of stroke victims. One patient says the robotic arm and a game developed by these researchers helped him regain movement after a stroke cause paralysis to the left side of his body.

Unsure about becoming an entrepreneur? Neha Goel shares her story as a serial entrepreneur, discusses the world of risk entrepreneurs live in and provides insights to success. Currently, Goel is the CEO of Intelehealth, a telemedicine solution part of the Social Innovation Lab.

Multisensor Diagnostics was one of the four Maryland teams who swept the finals at the Association of University Technology Managers’ national business plan competition, but that was only one part of a busy month. The Johns Hopkins startup crisscrossed the country pitching its device that provides readings for eight health indicators from a patient’s breath, saliva and mucus.

What inspired Multisensor Diagnostics to develop better health care tracking technology? For CEO Sathya Elumala, it was his mother’s multiple chronic health conditions that result in her spending time in a hospital nearly every month. The company’s chief technology officer, Gene Fridman, lost a sister when a chronic condition wasn’t detected in time.
For more than 140 years, Johns Hopkins has brought the benefits of discovery to the world. Now, in an effort to continue this tradition and to revitalize Baltimore, JHTV is providing the resources startups need to develop into sustainable businesses.

Startup news:

**Personal Genome Diagnostics (PGDX)**, a startup leasing laboratory space in the FastForward 1812 innovation hub, has been awarded an SBIR contract from the National Cancer Institute. The award is aimed at helping the startup develop a novel diagnostic that identifies patients who will most likely benefit from treatment with immuno-oncology cancer drugs.

Did you attend Light City? If so, there’s a good chance you heard a Johns Hopkins entrepreneur discussing innovation. Among those who spoke at the event are leaders from **Urban Pastoral**, **Protenus**, **Sonavex** and **Fusifrom**.

At the Association of University Technology Managers’ national business plan competition, Johns Hopkins startups took three of four spots in the finals. **LifeSprout** won the $10,000 top prize and **Multisensor Diagnostics** and **Pathovax** finished as runners up. The fourth team in the finals, Grip Boost, came from the University of Maryland.

Baltimore News:

Social entrepreneurship will be getting a boost from Red Bull this summer. The energy drink purveyor will launch its **Red Bull Amaphiko Academy** to help social entrepreneurs bring their ideas to life.

The Johns Hopkins University and the Johns Hopkins Health System hired 304 workers from distressed Baltimore neighborhoods in the first year of **HopkinsLocal**, an initiative created to strengthen Baltimore’s economy. Additionally, $55.5 million in construction spending was directed to businesses owned by women or minorities and to disadvantaged businesses.

A study by **GlassDoor** recently ranked Baltimore as the 17th best city in the country for job seekers. Baltimore earned its ranking for having a large number of job openings and because of its high median household income.

**Baltimore** climbed one spot from 2016 in SmartAsset’s ranking of the best cities for women in tech. It now ranks third in the country. Of the city’s tech jobs, 32.5 percent are filled by women, six points higher than the national average.

**Tech.co** ranked Baltimore one of its top 20 “Next in Tech” cities fostering startup growth. The rankings were based on the percentage of job postings that contained the word “startup.”

Eccentricity is in Baltimore’s DNA, and that extends all the way to the city’s architecture. In a recent profile, **Architectural Digest** called Baltimore “one of the most exciting U.S. cities right now.”

Startups in California, New York and Massachusetts get a majority of venture capital funding, but that’s not for the best, says **Steve Case**. The co-founder of AOL believes that if you want to rethink health care, for example, you need to spend time and invest in startups in Baltimore, among other places.
Impact Hub Event Showcases Social Innovation Lab and Ventures

The energy flowing through Impact Hub at 7:30 a.m. on February 22 had nothing to do with coffee-fueled caffeine rushes and everything to do with passion for social entrepreneurship.

That morning, dozens and dozens of people packed the Station North-based innovation lab for SocEnt Breakfast #29, a re-occurring morning meeting filled with brainstorming and networking to support emerging social ventures.

This iteration featured three Social Innovation Lab (SIL) teams (The Whole Teacher, Touching Young Lives and B-360), and began with SIL Director Darius Graham providing an overview of the program’s mission to develop nonprofits and mission-driven for-profits to better communities in Baltimore and around the world.

After Jenna Shaw of The Whole Teacher, Shantell Roberts of Touching Young Lives and Brittany Young of B-360 explained the issues their ventures intended to solve, each met with a focus group of 15-20 attendees to identify ways to strengthen their organizations.

“The questions were really great, and I felt that people were engaged and interested in what we were working on and very quick to offer community resources,” says Shaw, who established The Whole Teacher to increase the health, happiness and retention of Baltimore teachers.

The focus groups exposed the social entrepreneurs to diverse perspectives presented through a lens shaped by a variety of professional and life experiences.

“My group had so many people interested in Touching Young Lives,” says Roberts, who founded her nonprofit that provides education and tools to reduce the occurrence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) after her 1-year-old daughter died. “One mother in my group lost her baby to SIDS, and she was able to extend her thoughts in any capacity I needed.”

In the case of B-360, a group dedicated to changing the perceptions of engineers and dirt bike riders and using dirt bikes to teach Baltimore children STEM, it not only received feedback but used the time to educate the group.

“We talked a lot about my students who by the age of 5 either ride dirt bikes or want to become dirt bike riders,” Young says. “The group was valuable because they had raw opinions, but they left viewing riders differently.”

Though the event officially lasted only about 90 minutes, many members of the focus groups lingered to meet and exchange business cards with the other SIL entrepreneurs.

“I left with a lot of business cards, and I have a lot of upcoming meetings because of that day,” Roberts says, noting specifically an opportunity to work with the International Rescue Committee to discuss how a relationship between their two organizations might look like.

Shaw and Young echoed that sentiment. Less than a week after the event she had reached out to about a dozen people she had met and had several more reach out to her.

“I made a lot of connections just from that morning,” Shaw says. “People have been offering to make introductions on behalf of The Whole Teacher and others have discussed how they approached similar challenges.”

“We made a lot of great connections, including mechanics, business interests, motorcycle riders, and STEM experts,” Young says. “The best part was that the event was unscripted but had a great flow, so everyone left feeling empowered. B-360 left having more concrete validations on the importance of our work and the need in the community.”

The advice, inspiration and connections derived from this event, which included past SIL cohort members, may turn out to be indispensable. At least one of the entrepreneurs looks forward to paying the support she has received forward.

“(SIL alumni) have all been really inviting and willing to help in whatever they can,” Roberts says. “I always joke with (Graham), ‘How great do I have to be so that I can come back and help future teams?’ I’m always willing to lend assistance.”
JHTV Presents ‘Lessons on Building an Urban Innovation Ecosystem’ at SXSW

On March 14, a crowd at South by Southwest (SXSW) got a glimpse into the transformative nature of innovation. Social Innovation Lab Director Darius Graham and FastForward Program Manager Megan Wahler’s presentation showed how innovation is revitalizing Baltimore, and how other communities can drive positive change within their communities.

The session, “Lessons on Building an Urban Innovation Ecosystem,” highlighted how Baltimore’s recent unrest inspired universities, companies, foundations and community organizations from across the city and state to double down on existing efforts to drive change in the city. Baltimore is now poised to emerge as a hub for innovation. As Graham and Wahler shared Baltimore’s story, they provided takeaways from the efforts of Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures to empower the city’s entrepreneurs. With these tips, they set the session’s attendees on a path to drive change in their own communities through the construction of an inclusive innovation ecosystem.

Help us bring life-changing innovation to the world

Innovation is essential to our culture at Johns Hopkins. Across our campuses, faculty members and students are eager to develop their ideas and discoveries and put them to use in benefit to society – here in Baltimore and around the world.

We welcome gifts of any size. We would be happy to discuss our range of giving opportunities and other giving options.

For more info, please visit http://ventures.jhu.edu/give/