

Volume 1, June 2025 • Innovation in Arizona

Silicon Oasis

powered by Arizona Ascent

First Edition of the Silicon Oasis Magazine

CAPITAL IN THE DESERT

Why Venture Investors Are
Finally Betting Big on
Greater Phoenix

BUILT IN THE DESERT, BACKED BY THE BAY

Steerco Raises to Kill QBRs
and Reshape Post-Sale
Workflows

DO IT SCARED: SAFER DINING WITH TRISTAN TIERCE

How One Founder Is
Turning Food Safety
Trauma into a
Movement

Still Writing Checks

35+ VC Firms and Accelerators
Backing Underdog Markets

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter To The Editor	03
Vision and Impact	04
Silicon Oasis News	05
Community Events	07
Investor Insights	15
Funding Rounds	19
Founder Spotlights	32
Meet The Team	42

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITOR



Kyle Macdonald

Editor-in-Chief, Silicon Oasis

A few months ago, we kept hearing the same thing from founders, investors, and community builders across Arizona: there's something special happening here — but no one's telling the story.

We launched Silicon Oasis to change that. Arizona has long been a place for bold ideas. But despite the talent, momentum, and ambition in this state, our innovation economy has often felt disconnected — with startups, investors, universities, and communities all working in parallel.

If we want to build something lasting, something real, we have to do it together — and we have to shine a light on the people doing the work. That's what Silicon Oasis is all about. Not hype, not headlines — but builders.

The researchers turning discoveries into companies. The bootstrapped founders solving real problems. The investors backing local talent.

And the community leaders making it all easier to find, access, and believe in. This magazine is one part of a growing movement.

We host curated events that bring together founders, funders, and ecosystem allies — from invite-only pitch nights to community mixers and expert panels. We produce media that tells real stories — through podcasts, blog posts, and now this publication.

We've launched a network of ambassadors representing every corner of Arizona's tech scene — people who are leading, mentoring, and giving this ecosystem a face. And we work alongside incredible community pillars — organizations driving their niche sectors forward and co-creating a unified vision for Arizona innovation.

We're not just highlighting momentum — we're helping build it. If you believe Arizona deserves a stronger, more connected startup community, we'd love your help growing it. Subscribe. Share it. Tell your story. Help us build the platform this ecosystem deserves.



VISION & IMPACT

Transforming Arizona into a global tech hub—led by local founders, built for the future.

Silicon Oasis is a nonprofit dedicated to uniting Arizona’s tech ecosystem. Our mission is to strengthen the local innovation economy by bringing together founders, investors, and entrepreneurs—and by creating spaces where collaboration can thrive.

We do this in three key ways:

- **Centralizing the Ecosystem** through startup-focused events and practical workshops led by experienced builders and funders.
- **Cultivating Community** by fostering authentic, expectation-free connections that go beyond traditional networking.
- **Spotlighting Talent** with dynamic video podcasts and media that highlight Arizona’s most promising innovators.

Pillar Partners



Driving Arizona’s AI future by connecting founders to mentorship, talent, capital, and transformative innovation pathways.



Accelerating defense and aerospace innovation through founder support, workforce development, and mission-aligned industry partnerships.



Founder-led software community uniting Arizona builders through events, peer groups, and startup-focused resources.

AZ CLEANTECH

Uniting Arizona’s climate innovators across energy, water, and mobility to accelerate clean tech collaboration and impact.

SILICON OASIS TAPS SEAN BAIR FOR BOARD LEADERSHIP

Veteran founder joins Silicon Oasis to help scale innovation across the Southwest.

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief


Silicon Oasis Initiative proudly announces the appointment of serial entrepreneur and Southwest tech leader Sean Bair to its Board of Directors — a move that underscores the organization's commitment to cultivating a thriving startup ecosystem.

Sean's appointment is far from symbolic. It's rooted in decades of experience building and scaling companies that prioritize impact, security, and trust. From BAIR Analytics (acquired by LexisNexis) to GameSafe.ai, Nouri.ai, and now SWORN.ai, Sean has consistently launched ventures that blend technology with meaningful outcomes.

His entrepreneurial journey began in the early 1990s, while interning at the Tempe Police Department.

Frustrated by the inefficiency of manually reading thousands of reports, Sean used his early coding skills — which he began honing in 1982 — to create software that could identify crime patterns faster and more accurately. That tool, ATTACK (Automated Tactical Analysis of Crime), wasn't built to start a business — it was built to make a difference.





But when neighboring police departments asked to use the software, Sean recognized its broader potential. What began as a side project turned into BAIR Analytics, which would go on to serve major law enforcement agencies across the U.S. and internationally. A major inflection point came when the Department of Defense began using the platform to track IED patterns in Iraq. This expansion required adapting the software for classified environments and scaling a team of analysts — all while maintaining the tool’s integrity and purpose.

Strategic partnerships with IBM, Motorola, and others helped BAIR grow into a respected player in the analytics space. Eventually, Sean began exploring acquisition options. After a yearlong process and multiple offers, he sold the company to LexisNexis in 2015 — not just for the best deal, but for a shared mission and assurance that his employees would be supported.

Today, Sean is channeling that same drive into SWORN.ai, a company focused on improving the health and well-being of first responders. Using biometric wearables, survey data, and agency insights, the platform helps departments proactively address burnout, mental health, and physical readiness. It’s personal: police officers have a life expectancy of just 57. SWORN aims to change that.

"Silicon Oasis is becoming a powerhouse gathering place for entrepreneurs, founders, students, and innovators working to move technology forward in the region," Sean said. "With my own tech roots coming from Arizona, from BAIR Analytics to GameSafe.ai, it’s encouraging to see momentum building around local talent, strong universities, and experienced business leaders stepping up to help the next generation."

That momentum isn’t confined to Arizona. Many founders from Utah’s startup ecosystem — from BYU, UVU, and other institutions — are returning to the Southwest, bringing valuable insights and energy. Sean sees this as a moment of opportunity to bridge communities and accelerate innovation across state lines.

As a board member, Sean will help steer Silicon Oasis’ programming, mentorship network, and strategic partnerships. His guidance will be instrumental in expanding access to resources for early- and growth-stage startups alike.

“Sean has walked the founder journey more than once — from bootstrapping to acquisition,” said Kyle Macdonald, COO of Silicon Oasis. “He understands what it takes to build something lasting in the Southwest, and we’re honored to have him help steer the next chapter of our growth.”

SILICON OASIS X SOPE: HEALTHTECH UNLEASHED

Silicon Oasis and SoPE unite Arizona's builders to accelerate health innovation

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor

We didn't need a keynote to know something big was happening. The second we opened the doors at Loloft in Tempe, the energy told us everything — physicians swapping ideas with AI engineers, founders sketching out diagnostics platforms on whiteboards, and investors asking the one question that changes everything: "How can I help?"


This was more than a meetup. It was a marker in Arizona's fast-growing innovation story. Earlier this month, Silicon Oasis teamed up with the Society of Physician Entrepreneurs (SoPE) to host a night dedicated to one thing: spotlighting the next generation of HealthTech in Arizona. The result? A packed, high-energy evening uniting clinicians, engineers, investors, and startup operators — all driven by the same mission: to shape the future of medicine.

Innovation on the Rise

Arizona's bioscience and health innovation sectors are in rapid ascent — thanks to institutional anchors like Mayo Clinic, ASU, UArizona, TGen, and the Phoenix Biomedical Campus. But beyond the big logos are the builders turning bold ideas into real, often life-saving, solutions.



[WATCH THE VIDEO OF THE EVENT](#)



Arizona’s bioscience and health innovation sectors are in rapid ascent — thanks to institutional anchors like Mayo Clinic, ASU, UArizona, TGen, and the Phoenix Biomedical Campus. But beyond the big logos are the builders turning bold ideas into real, often life-saving, solutions.

We’re talking about:

- AI-powered diagnostics
- Digital therapeutics platforms
- Biotech breakthroughs
- Medical device startups built in garages, labs — and now, coworking warehouses

“You could feel it,” one guest told me. “This wasn’t about pitching. It was about solving real problems — and finding people crazy enough to help.”

Powered by Community — and Space That Gets It

The event took place at Loloft, a Phoenix-based coworking hub that’s part industrial workspace, part community accelerator. With flexible warehouse suites, tech-enabled offices, and startup-friendly terms, Loloft is quickly becoming a favorite for early-stage founders with complex builds. And the hospitality? Top-tier.

“We’ve hosted events at a lot of spaces,” I told their team, “but your layout, vibe, and founder-first energy is unmatched.”

What’s Next?

This event marked our first collaboration with SoPE, and it won’t be the last. Together, we’re building bridges between physicians and entrepreneurs, labs and living rooms, investors and inventors. Because the future of medicine won’t be built by one industry alone — it will take a movement.

And Arizona? We believe it’s the next frontier. If you’re building in health, biotech, or medtech — or want to be — Silicon Oasis wants to help you find your tribe. Let’s build it together.

ARIZONA'S HACKER HOUSE: A NEW STARTUP LAUNCHPAD

Silicon Oasis and Devlabs launch a launchpad for Arizona's technical founders.

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor

Last Thursday at Loloft in Tempe, I experienced one of those rare moments that remind me why I co-founded Silicon Oasis. The energy in the room was electric — founders pitching bold ideas, mentors sharing hard-won wisdom, and investors leaning in with genuine excitement. It was clear: Arizona's tech scene isn't just growing — it's evolving. And the launch of Arizona's first-ever Hacker House, DevHouse, marks the start of a new chapter.

DevHouse is not your typical startup program. It's a six-week, all-in sprint where builders come together to build, ship, and repeat — fast. Hosted at Loloft Inc., a vibrant 24/7 coworking space in Phoenix, DevHouse is designed to cut through the noise and help technical founders turn raw ideas into real, investor-ready startups. Here's what participants get:

- 24/7 access to a dynamic workspace
- A high-energy tribe of builders who push each other
- Late-night brainstorming, demo nights, and relentless iteration
- Mentorship from top VCs, exited founders, Fortune 500 execs, and investors — all under one roof
- A launchpad where founders are truly at the center





When we announced the program, I said:

“I’m beyond excited that Silicon Oasis is cohosting this with Devlabs. It’s all about momentum — creating and shipping real tech solutions that will fuel Arizona’s startup ecosystem like never before.”

Devlabs, the powerhouse behind this, has already built an incredible community:

- 450+ members in just two semesters, one of ASU’s largest clubs
- 10+ high-energy events with 70+ builders on average
- DevSpace, a 6-week cohort with a \$1,000 prize for the top startup
- DevHacks, ASU’s major hackathon with 170+ participants and 45+ projects
- Frequent visits from top VCs, angel investors, and Arizona’s leading founders

Our mission at Silicon Oasis is simple: unite and spotlight Arizona’s incredible tech talent. This program is a huge step forward. Huge thanks to Devlabs President Dhanush Vardhan for the partnership, and to Paola Ibarra and Colton Varner at Loloft Inc. for creating a space where dreams become startups.

The launch night was a vivid reminder that startups aren’t built in isolation. Anika Patel, a participant, put it perfectly:

“Working 24/7 alongside other builders and mentors who’ve been there — that kind of energy and support is priceless. It’s what pushes you to get stuff done.”

Over six weeks, these founders will grind hard, testing assumptions, pivoting fast, and building products that solve real problems — ready for investors and customers alike.

Marcus Lee, another founder, said:

“The pressure of late-night brainstorming and demo days wasn’t easy, but it forged friendships and products that wouldn’t exist without that intensity.”

Arizona’s tech ecosystem is at an inflection point. DevHouse is a beacon for builders ready to disrupt, scale, and leave their mark. It’s not just a program — it’s a launchpad to launch hard.

If you missed this launch, don’t worry. The journey is just beginning. Follow Silicon Oasis and Devlabs for updates on the next cohort. If you’re serious about building something real, this is where you start. Let’s make history — one hack at a time.

ARIZONA'S DUAL-USE LAUNCHPAD

Inside Southwest MAC's First-Ever Fuel Accelerator Demo Day — and the Startups Bridging Commercial and Defense Tech

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor


What do you get when defense-grade tech meets Arizona startup grit? Not just a demo day — a launchpad for the next generation of dual-use innovation.

Earlier this month, Silicon Oasis was on the ground in downtown Phoenix to witness a moment of local tech history: the first-ever Fuel Dual-Use Accelerator Demo Day, hosted by the Southwest Mission Accelerator Center (Southwest MAC). The event marked the culmination of an intensive 8-week cohort designed to accelerate companies building “dual-use” technologies — products that can scale across both commercial and national defense markets.

These weren't just slide decks and MVPs. This was real tech solving real-world problems: AI-driven thermal imaging for industrial safety, modular drone control platforms, and field-ready tools that could be deployed as easily in mines as in military zones.

We captured exclusive interviews with the Southwest MAC team, startup founders, and our very own ambassador Debin Ray of Desert Rotor. And the best part? Some of the companies are already landing contracts.





With a major follow-up planned for the fall, it's clear this was more than a one-time showcase — it was the start of a movement. “It's the first of its kind,” said Drew, CEO of Southwest MAC. “And based on how this first cohort performed — it definitely won't be the last.”

Dual-Use Innovation, Defined

While “dual-use” may sound like industry jargon, it describes a growing category of technology with both military and civilian applications. Think thermal cameras that can be deployed for border security or mining operations. Drones that monitor oil fields or aid in disaster response. Software that works as well in a war room as it does in a warehouse.

“What we're building at Delta Thermal touches almost every part of your life — energy, transportation, and data,” said CEO Andy Griffith. “You don't see us, but we're behind the systems that keep the modern world running.” Their tech — AI-enhanced thermal modules — is already being used to monitor servers, protect infrastructure, and improve industrial safety in sectors ranging from rail to renewables.

From the Ground Up: Builders in the Spotlight

Then there's Desert Rotor, a Tucson-based startup designing universal drone controllers that can interface with virtually any unmanned system.

“There are too many drones, too many controllers,” said founder Devon Ray. “We're streamlining the industry with one control platform — and we're doing it here in Arizona.”

Ray's human-interface systems aren't just hardware; they represent a vision for modular, scalable, and American-made aerospace control. “We want to stay here. Hire here. Grow here,” he emphasized. “And we want to be a flywheel for opportunity — not just for our company, but for the whole state.”

Why Arizona?

With access to defense hubs like Luke Air Force Base, a booming aerospace corridor, and research institutions like ASU, Mayo Clinic, and UArizona, Arizona is uniquely positioned to be a national leader in dual-use innovation. Add in an active angel and early-stage VC community — and it's no surprise that tech companies are choosing to scale here.

“The more we support each other — investors, operators, connectors — the faster Arizona's entire ecosystem grows,” said Drew.

That spirit of support and intentionality was palpable throughout the day — from investor introductions and mentor shout-outs to live pitches and product demos.

AI COLLECTIVE EXPANDS TO ARIZONA

The new community puts Phoenix on the map for applied AI in biosciences.

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

Big news for Arizona's AI ecosystem: The AI Collective—a global community of more than 70,000 AI founders, technologists, and researchers—is officially launching a local chapter in Phoenix, led by Silicon Oasis Ambassadors Anisia Corona and Rob Andersen. They're not just replicating a playbook. They're rewriting it.

Why This Chapter Matters

Phoenix has rapidly become one of the nation's most dynamic bioscience hubs, thanks to the strength of institutions like ASU, the University of Arizona, Mayo Clinic, the Phoenix Biomedical Campus, and Connect Labs. But despite this momentum, the region has lacked a true community hub for applied AI innovation in healthtech, medtech, and biotech.

With The AI Collective's new Arizona chapter, that gap is closing—bringing together builders, researchers, and entrepreneurs working at the intersection of artificial intelligence and human health. Unlike many tech communities that focus on panels and lectures, this chapter is taking a hands-on, builder-first approach: no gatekeeping, no fluff—just real tools, real skills, and real collaboration.





What to Expect

The chapter will launch with a series of programs designed to bring the local AI community together and get ideas into motion. These include:

- Demo Days for early-stage AI founders
- Hackathons focused on health and life sciences
- Workshops on UI/UX, no-code tooling, and technical integrations
- A collaborative, inclusive space for both technical and non-technical contributors

It's all about learning by doing, not just passively watching. Whether you're new to AI or deep in the space, this is an open invitation to build together. "We want to lower the barrier to building in AI," says Rob Andersen. "That means creating a space where anyone can contribute—regardless of background or title."

Get Involved

The chapter is currently looking for sponsors, especially software platforms and service providers that want to engage with Arizona's growing tech community. There's also an open call for a third founding organizer—someone who brings a unique perspective, skillset, or network to help shape the community's next phase. Events will officially launch this September, with Rob leading on-the-ground operations while Anisia ramps from California.

Arizona Is Ready

This launch isn't just a milestone for The AI Collective—it's a signal that Arizona is becoming a serious player in frontier tech. From bioscience and diagnostics to AI-driven research, the region is primed to lead in health innovation. And now, it has a community to match.

CAPITAL IN THE DESERT

APRIL 2025 DEAL ACTIVITY

**\$133 Million across
16 deals**

Q1 2025 VC DEALS

**\$133 Million across
16 deals**

ECOSYSTEM EVOLUTION

(2014 -2024)

**143% increase in
deal value**

**7th starts up per in
capita in the US**

CAPITAL IN THE DESERT

Why Venture Investors Are Finally Betting Big on Greater Phoenix

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

For years, Phoenix wasn't part of the national VC conversation. Startups existed, but funding didn't follow. Founders often looked out-of-state to raise their first checks—pitching firms in California, Texas, or New York just to get started. But over the past decade, the landscape has quietly shifted.

According to the GPEC'S May 2025 Industry Outlook Report, venture investment in Greater Phoenix has grown 146% since 2015, outpacing cities like Austin and Salt Lake City. The region has cleared \$1 billion in annual VC funding for seven consecutive years. In the first quarter of 2025 alone, local startups raised \$214 million across 34 deals. This is no longer a fluke. It's a pattern of consistent growth, backed by expanding infrastructure and a rising number of homegrown companies ready to scale.

The Early-Stage Bottleneck

Despite the momentum, early-stage funding remains the region's most pressing gap. Seed and pre-seed rounds—especially deals under \$5 million—are still difficult to raise locally.

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\$214 million

was raised by local startups across 34 deals

\$190 billion

in semiconductor and biotech investments.

While firms like AZ-VC, PHX Ventures, and Monsoon have brought more attention to the region, the volume of local capital still doesn't match the number of startups emerging across the Valley. Many founders continue to rely on out-of-state VCs for their first institutional checks. The result: promising Arizona companies often scale elsewhere. Addressing this funding bottleneck is key to long-term ecosystem success.

A Market with Leverage

Three factors are making Phoenix increasingly attractive to investors:

- Lower startup costs. Founders here can operate leaner, meaning VC dollars stretch further than in San Francisco or New York.
- Industrial momentum. Over \$190 billion in semiconductor and biotech investments—led by Intel, TSMC, Amkor, and Mayo Clinic—has positioned Phoenix as a high-growth hub for deep tech.
- A growing talent pool. With over 36,000 STEM graduates annually from ASU, UArizona, and GCU, the city has a steady pipeline of technical talent.

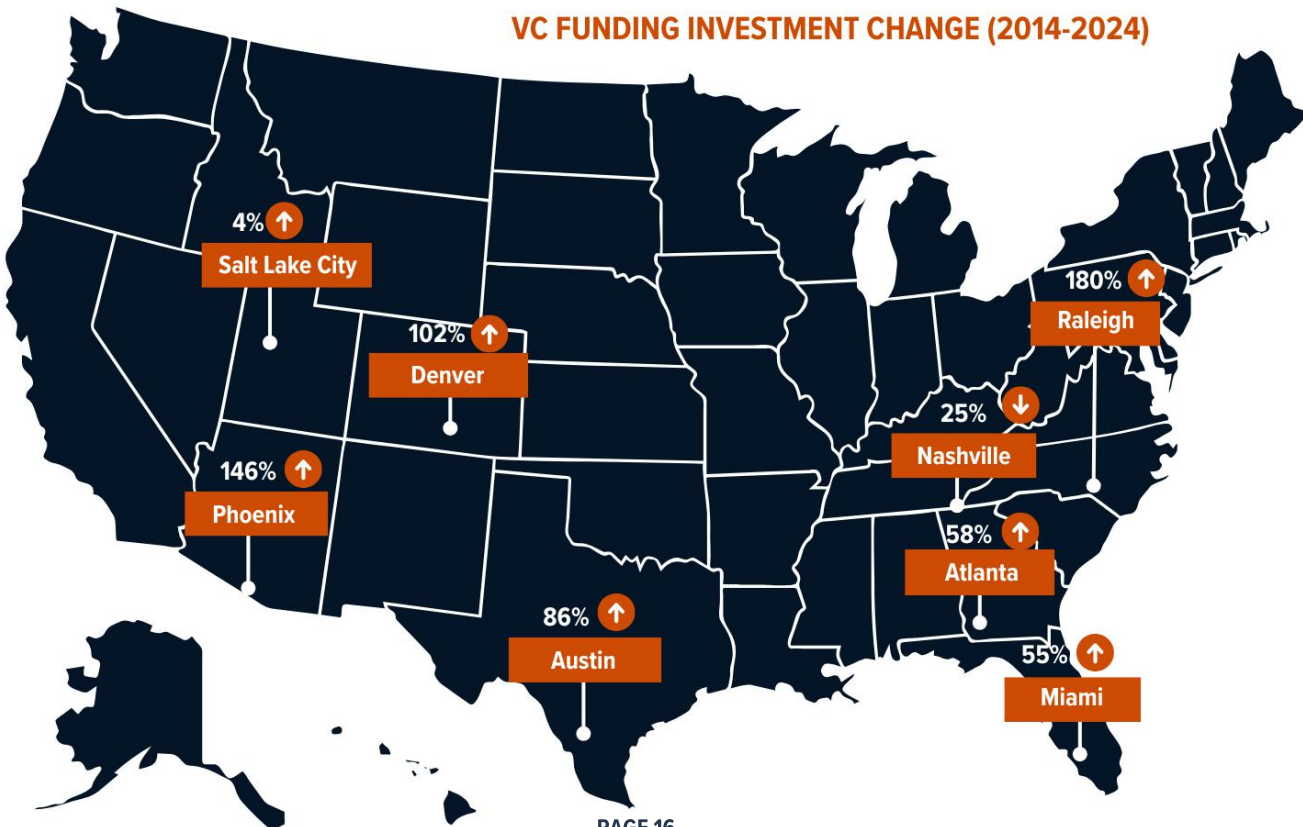
These ingredients have transformed Phoenix into one of the most capital-efficient innovation markets in the country—one that can support both traditional SaaS startups and new ventures in semiconductors, climate tech, and healthcare.

What Comes Next

To close the loop, more early-stage capital needs to come from within the state. The Industry Outlook Report points to three priorities for regional growth:

- Increase the number of locally led seed deals
- Create better access to non-dilutive funding and venture studios
- Anchor Phoenix's strengths—like chips, digital health, and applied AI—with vertically focused capital

As the ecosystem matures, the next wave of successful companies will likely come from founders who





LIONCREST VENTURES

Arizona's New Ally for Scaling Startups

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

It started, as many great ventures do, with a problem. Leib Bolel and Ryan Edwards, two long-time operators and investors entrenched in Arizona's tech scene, saw a widening gap in the local funding landscape. Startups were emerging. Talent was growing. But when it came time to scale, many founders hit a wall. The capital they needed was either too rigid, too costly, or too far removed from the realities of building in the Southwest.

"There were founders with real traction and incredible grit, but they were flying to San Francisco to get the support they should've found here," said Bolel. "We knew Arizona could do better."

That insight sparked the creation of Lioncrest Ventures — a Scottsdale-based venture capital firm launched in June 2025 with a mission to fuel Arizona's next wave of high-growth companies. But Lioncrest isn't just another VC fund. With a \$100 million platform and a unique hybrid approach offering both equity and venture debt, it represents a new playbook for regional capital.



Image: Lioncrest Ve



Their thesis is clear: founders shouldn't have to choose between giving up control or grinding without fuel. With Lioncrest, they don't have to. The firm is built to meet startups where they are, especially in complex, regulated industries like cybersecurity, digital health, logistics, legaltech, and fintech.

"For some companies, equity is rocket fuel. For others, credit is the better vehicle to scale without sacrificing ownership," said Edwards, who leads Lioncrest's debt strategy. "We're here to provide both." That flexibility comes from deep experience. Edwards previously led the Prospeq Credit Fund and spent years structuring financing at Silicon Valley Bank. Bolel has long been a force in Arizona's innovation landscape through the Arizona-Israel Technology Alliance and other initiatives.

Together, they're not just investing capital. They're building infrastructure—helping founders navigate regulatory challenges, connect with networks, and scale without leaving the state.

Lioncrest's first close landed \$30 million from family offices, strategic operators, and tech founders who believe in the mission. Early conversations with Arizona startups are already underway, with the first deals expected this summer.

But for Bolel and Edwards, this is about more than transactions. "This is personal," Bolel said. "We've seen firsthand how difficult it can be to scale in Arizona. We built Lioncrest because we believe the next generation of transformative companies is already here. They just need the right kind of support."

In a region often overlooked by coastal investors, Lioncrest Ventures is a bold bet that Arizona's time has come. And if they have their way, the state won't just be known for startups anymore. It will be known for scaling them.

STILL WRITING CHECKS

35+ VC Firms and Accelerators Backing Underdog Markets

By Makaiah Gorham, Venture Research Analyst

Early-stage capital hasn't disappeared. It's just gotten more selective. As headlines scream about a funding freeze, a quieter truth is unfolding across startup ecosystems beyond the coasts: checks are still being written—just with more intention, more scrutiny, and more regional diversity than ever before.

In response, Silicon Oasis has compiled the Capital Connector, an exclusive list of 35+ venture capital firms and accelerators still actively investing in pre-seed and seed-stage startups, even in today's tighter market.

These aren't the usual suspects. From niche funds backing first-time founders to accelerators laser-focused on nontraditional tech hubs, these capital sources are placing bets on the next wave of breakout startups—especially in regions like Arizona.

Why This Guide Matters Now

Funding at the earliest stages has become harder to access, but not impossible. Today's VCs are more focused, more thesis-driven, and more cautious with their capital—but for the right team solving a real problem, money is still moving. That means founders need more than a pitch deck. They need the right map. This list that map:

- Not a roundup of inactive firms.
- Not a Google search of outdated accelerators.
- But a vetted, relevant, and regionally attuned guide to early-stage capital sources in mid-2025.

Who's Still Funding?

Inside, you'll find over 35 firms and programs that are actively investing in early-stage startups. These range from respected seed-stage powerhouses to emerging funds betting on nontraditional founders and regions. Featured firms include:

- **Hustle Fund** – Investing at the earliest stage possible, with a focus on scrappy execution.
- **Bonfire Ventures** – A firm with deep experience in B2B software and a willingness to back beyond the Bay Area.
- **500 Global** – A globally minded accelerator with strong ties to diverse startup ecosystems.
- **Initialized Capital, Obvious Ventures, and the up-and-coming Pegasus Angel Accelerator** round out a growing list of firms with a finger on the pulse of the next generation of builders.

Arizona and the Rise of Underdog Markets

As Arizona's startup scene matures, the barriers to raising institutional capital remain steep—but shrinking. Co-working labs, angel networks, and local accelerators are helping more founders gain early traction. But the question remains: where do you go when it's time to raise that first real round? This guide answers that question. Every firm on the list is either actively writing checks today, has invested in Southwest-based founders, or has clearly stated their interest in supporting emerging markets. It's not about chasing trends—it's about building something real, with partners who believe geography doesn't limit greatness.

The 2025 Capital Connector List

The following firms are still actively investing in pre-seed and seed startups. We've included direct links to their websites so you can explore who they back and how to pitch.

Bonfire Ventures	http://www.bonfirevc.com
Thrive Capital	https://thrivecapi.com
Pegasus Angel Accelerator	https://loom.ly/egIXjNo
Hustle Fund	https://hustlefund.vc
Obvious Ventures	https://obvious.com/
Initialized Capital	https://initialized.com
Insight Partners	https://www.insightpartners.com
Plug and Play Tech Center	https://www.pluginandplaytechcenter.com/
Susa Ventures	https://www.susaventures.com
Modern Technical Fund	https://moderntechicalfund.com/
Menlo Ventures	https://www.menlovc.com
Outlander VC	https://outlander.vc
Wing Venture Capital	https://wing.vc
Ulu Ventures	https://www.uluventures.com
NFX	https://www.nfx.com
Long Journey	https://www.longjourney.vc/
Better Tomorrow Ventures	https://btv.vc

The 2025 Capital Connector List

NextUnicorn.Fund VC, Accelerator	https://nextunicorn.fund/
Collide Capital	https://collidecap.com/
Fusion Fund	https://www.fusionfund.com/
Early Game Ventures	https://earlygame.vc
Founders Fund	https://foundersfund.com
Unshackled Ventures	https://www.unshackledvc.com
New Enterprise Associates (NEA)	https://www.nea.com
Affinity Ventures	https://www.affinityventures.co.uk/
Uncork Capital	https://www.uncorkcapital.com
Lobby Capital	https://lobby.vc/
Boost VC	https://www.boost.vc
Forum Ventures	https://www.forumvc.com/
Pear VC	https://www.pear.vc
Kindred Ventures	https://www.kindredventures.com
SE Ventures	https://www.se.com/
Torch Capital	https://torchcapital.vc
Recursive Ventures	https://www.recursiveventures.com
GTM Fund	https://www.gtmfund.com
Industrious Ventures	https://industrious.vc/
500 Global	https://500.co
First Minute Capital	https://www.firstminute.capital

You've got the list. Now use it. These firms are still writing checks—but they're backing founders who show clarity, traction, and grit. So do your homework. Lead with purpose. And remember: capital hasn't disappeared—it's just looking harder for the right fit. You've got the map. Now go build.



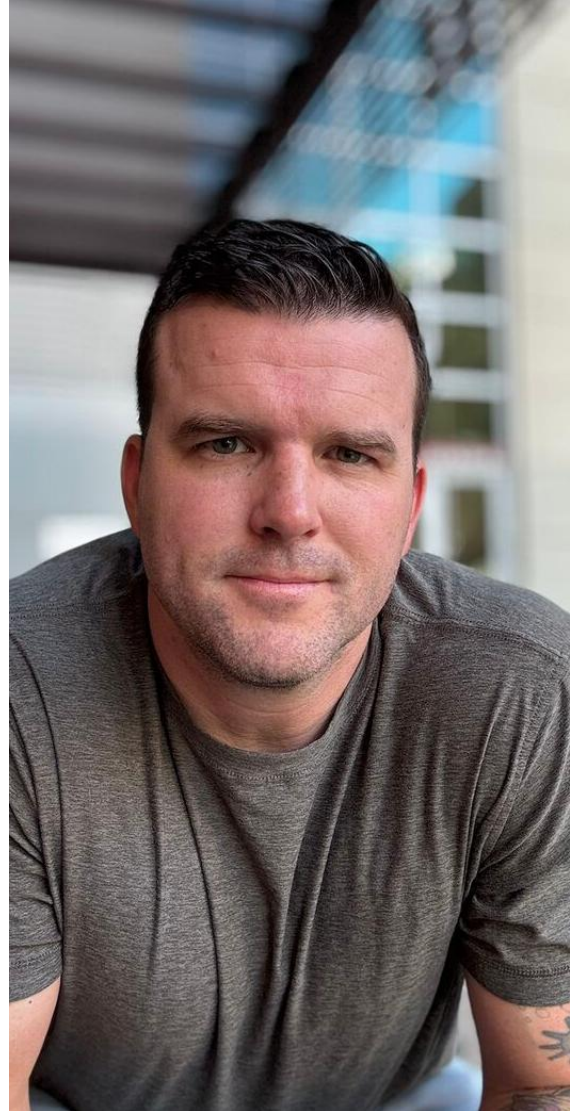
BUILT IN THE DESERT, BACKED BY THE BAY

Steerco Raises to Kill QBRs and Reshape Post-Sale Workflows

In a corner of downtown Phoenix, a small team is quietly dismantling one of SaaS's most time-consuming rituals: the Quarterly Business Review.

For decades, QBRs have been a staple of post-sale teams—complete with hours of CRM pulling, spreadsheet updating, slide formatting, and last-minute scrambling. But according to Zach Hawley, founder and CEO of Steerco, that era is ending. “We didn’t set out to make QBRs easier,” he says. “We set out to make them obsolete.”

That vision just got a major boost. Ontos, a respected Bay Area venture capital firm known for early investments in generative AI and category-defining software, has officially backed Steerco, marking a high-profile vote of confidence in both the company—and the state it calls home.





Steerco is part of a new class of Arizona startups: bold, AI-native, and unapologetically focused on real-world impact. Its platform combines CRM and product usage data to generate automated, executive-ready QBRs—with no slides, no prep, and no manual workflows.

But the product goes deeper than just killing slide decks. With features like live customer scorecards, AI alerts for churn risk, and automated follow-ups, Steerco positions itself as an agentic assistant—a behind-the-scenes operator that helps Customer Success and Account Management teams stay ahead of risk and aligned on growth. “It’s your least annoying teammate,” Hawley says with a grin. “It handles the formatting, the prep, the reports—so your team can focus on actual outcomes.”

Unlike legacy CS platforms designed for executives or ops, Steerco is built for the people in the trenches: the post-sale teams managing renewals, expansion, and retention in real time. The platform syncs usage patterns, CRM insights, and engagement data into a single, clean interface—empowering teams to act fast and work smarter.

Within months, Steerco found itself on the radar of GTM leaders across mid-market and enterprise companies—and then, on the radar of investors. For Ontos, the opportunity was clear: a focused, fast-moving team solving a real pain point with scalable AI. But it also signaled something else—a growing awareness that Arizona is no longer a flyover state when it comes to innovation.

While the Bay Area still holds its crown as the capital of venture capital, firms like Ontos are increasingly looking inland for talent and tenacity. Phoenix’s tech scene, once underestimated, is now home to startups like Steerco that aren’t just building cool products—they’re redefining entire categories.

With this funding round, Steerco plans to scale its engineering and GTM teams while accelerating its roadmap. New features on the horizon include automated action planning, stakeholder briefing packs, and enhanced AI collaboration tools designed to make customer teams even more proactive.

It’s a big leap—but it’s grounded in something real: a shift away from bloated processes and toward intelligent, invisible workflows that support how modern teams actually operate. And maybe, just maybe, it’s proof that you don’t need a coastal ZIP code—or a hundred-slide deck—to change how the enterprise works.

Arizona is rising—and investors are paying attention. Steerco’s win is just one signal in a growing wave of founder-led, AI-powered innovation emerging from the desert.

BRANCH THERAPEUTICS: ARIZONA'S BREAKTHROUGH CANCER STARTUP

An Arizona biotech startup is developing oral cancer drugs after raising \$4M in seed funding.


What if a drug originally designed for Alzheimer's disease could be reimaged to fight cancer? That's the question that led to the founding of Branch Therapeutics, a biotech startup born from the University of Arizona and the University of Dundee. Established in November 2024, Branch recently secured \$4 million in seed funding to advance its lead oral cancer drug toward clinical trials.

The company's approach focuses on colorectal cancer — the second leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. — with plans to expand into breast and liver cancers. Their drug candidates aim to be orally bioavailable, well-tolerated, and highly targeted, addressing key cancer pathways with precision.

A Scientific Pivot with Big Potential

Co-founders Christopher Hulme and Curtis Thorne are professors at the University of Arizona with decades of experience in medicinal chemistry and cellular medicine. Working alongside longtime collaborator Sourav Banerjee from the University of Dundee, they initially researched compounds targeting Alzheimer's disease.





“While refining these molecules, we discovered they held promise for cancer therapy,” Hulme explains. “We shifted our focus to create drugs that can safely inhibit two crucial signaling pathways — WNT and PI3K — implicated in colorectal cancer.”

These pathways are central drivers of tumor growth and drug resistance. About 90% of colorectal cancer cases show WNT overactivation, and one-third involve the PI3K pathway. Branch’s strategy is to develop compounds that selectively inhibit both, restoring healthy cell signaling and triggering tumor death.

Bridging Research and Real-World Impact

Branch’s technology was patented and licensed through Tech Launch Arizona (TLA), the university’s commercialization office. Early development support came from the Critical Path Institute’s Translational Therapeutics Accelerator (TRxA) and the Flinn Foundation.

“This partnership demonstrates how university research can be transformed into therapies that make a real difference,” says Bruce Burgess, director of venture development at TLA. “Branch is an example of Arizona’s growing ability to bring innovative biotech to market.”

According to Maaike Everts, PhD, executive director of TRxA, “Branch embodies the kind of translational science that accelerates promising discoveries from the lab to patients.”

Next Steps and Broader Impact

With its \$4 million seed round led by GKCC, LLC, Branch will focus on safety studies and prepare for Phase 1 clinical trials. The company is headquartered in Tucson, Arizona, with trials planned across the U.S. and Scotland.

Beyond the science, Branch’s progress signals a broader trend: Arizona is emerging as a serious player in life sciences innovation, supported by strong research institutions, commercialization resources, and venture capital. “This is the Arizona story often overlooked,” Hulme says. “World-class research, combined with local talent and funding, is enabling us to turn bold ideas into potential new medicines.”

As Branch moves closer to clinical trials, its founders remain motivated by the human impact of their work. “Our goal is to deliver cancer treatments that patients can actually take and tolerate — offering real hope,” Thorne says.



UPLINQ LANDS \$10M FOR AI BOOKKEEPING

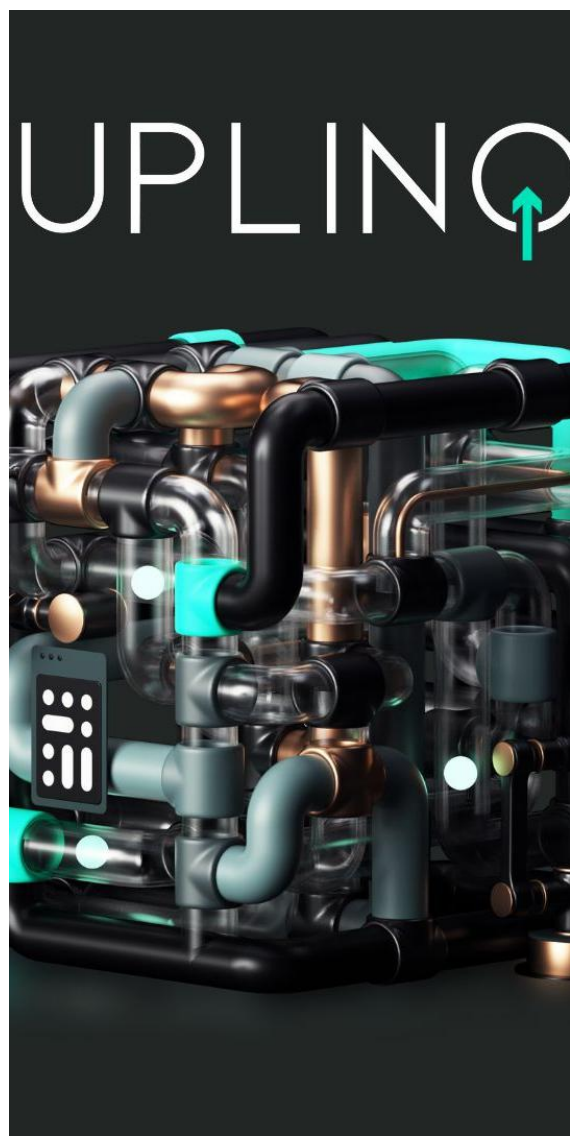
Phoenix startup targets the \$100B back-office problem with AI-driven finance tools.

In another win for Arizona’s fintech sector, Uplinq, a Phoenix-based startup, has raised a \$10 million Series A to help small and mid-sized businesses escape the chaos of manual bookkeeping.

Led by Next Coast Ventures, with participation from AZ-VC, Live Oak Ventures, and existing investors, the round signals growing confidence in Arizona’s homegrown startups—and the power of AI to modernize how Main Street manages money.

From Chaos to Clarity

Founded in 2020 by CEO Alex Glenn, Uplinq delivers intelligent automation tools that streamline the financial back office. Using a system of adaptive AI agents, the platform automates transaction categorization, reconciliation, tax preparation, and financial forecasting.





“We talk to business owners spending nights and weekends chasing receipts or fixing spreadsheets,” Glenn says. “That’s not sustainable—and it’s not why they started their business. We’re here to give them that time and clarity back.” Built to integrate with existing accounting platforms and bank feeds, Uplinq offers real-time financial visibility and smarter decision-making for business owners, founders, and finance teams alike. Today, it powers nearly 1,000 small businesses across the U.S.—a number the company expects to grow quickly.

What the Series A Fuels

The \$10 million raise will support Uplinq’s national expansion and continued platform development. Key priorities include:

- Scaling AI infrastructure and platform capabilities
- Expanding sales and customer success teams
- Enhancing features for accountants and finance pros
- Deepening integrations with banks and accounting systems

“Our vision is to become the intelligent financial layer for small business,” Glenn says. “We’re building systems that scale with our customers—learning as they grow.”

Fintech from the Desert

Uplinq’s success highlights the growing momentum of Arizona’s startup scene—and a shift in perception around where fintech can be built.

With backing from local investor AZ-VC and national firms like Next Coast Ventures, the company is proving that serious financial innovation is emerging far beyond the Bay Area.

“Arizona founders are solving real operational pain points,” says an AZ-VC spokesperson. “Uplinq is a perfect example of deep tech applied to everyday business challenges.” In the U.S., over 33 million small businesses struggle with outdated tools, fragmented workflows, and compliance headaches. Uplinq sees an opportunity to replace that with adaptive automation built for scale—and built with empathy.

Looking Ahead

As artificial intelligence redefines how companies operate, Uplinq is positioning itself not just as an accounting tool—but as the next-gen operating system for small business finance.

From Phoenix to the frontlines of America’s economy, the company is turning back-office bloat into real-time intelligence. It’s giving small businesses more than software—it’s giving them time, focus, and the tools to grow. And they’re just getting started.

SHILO RAISES \$2.6M TO BUILD AI TEAMMATES FOR THE REAL WORLD

Phoenix startup secures seed round to deliver human-AI collaboration in high-trust industries

What if AI didn't just automate tasks—but helped elite professionals win more often?

That's the premise behind Shilo.ai, a Phoenix-based startup building the first AI-native operating system for human-machine teamwork—starting with one of the most relationship-driven industries on the planet: real estate.

This June, Shilo announced a \$2.6 million seed round to accelerate product development and go-to-market expansion. The round was led by AZ-VC, Arizona's largest venture capital fund, founded by Jack Selby of Thiel Capital, with participation from other strategic backers focused on the future of industry-specific AI.

Shilo isn't trying to be just another productivity tool. Instead, it's building what co-founder and CEO Justin Benson calls an AI teammate—a digital assistant built for the real-world rhythm of elite sales agents, especially in high-touch verticals like real estate and lending. At the core is a product that listens, learns, and acts.

From Voice to Value: The Shilo Platform

Today's agents juggle dozens of tasks per client—calls, texts, follow-ups, CRM updates, deal flow, and document prep. Shilo's AI assistant is designed to lighten that load by understanding every conversation's context and automatically triggering next steps.





A Scientific Pivot with Big Potential

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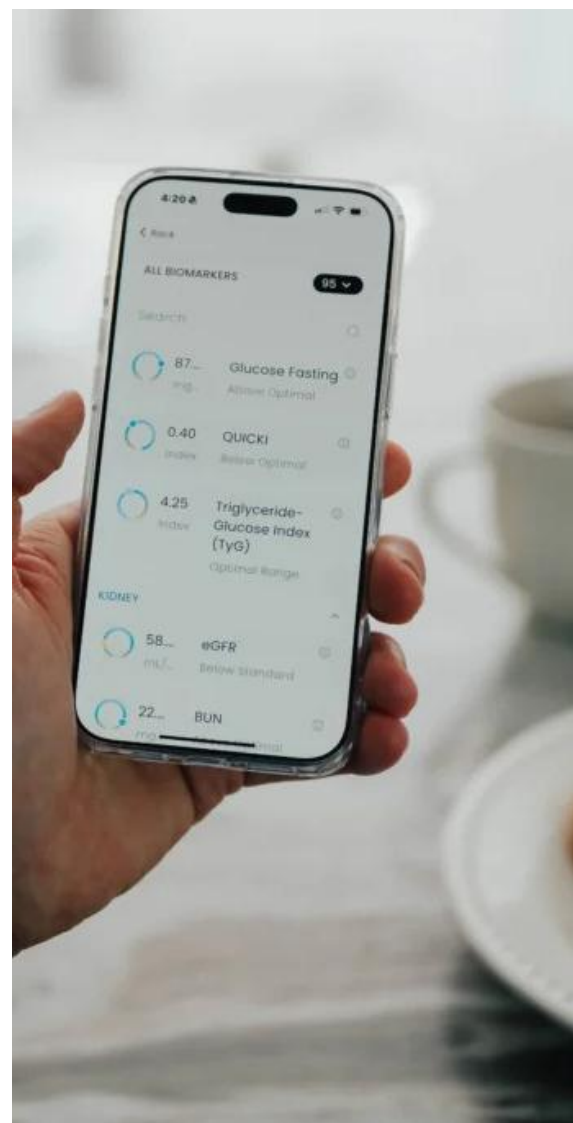
GEVITI CLOSES \$8.5M SEED ROUND

Geviti's AI-powered platform brings personalized, proactive care to the forefront.

In a fast-moving seed round that closed in under a month, Geviti, a longevity-focused healthtech startup, has raised \$8.5 million to scale its platform for proactive, personalized healthcare. The round was led by Redesign Health, with participation from several forward-thinking investors betting on the future of preventive medicine.

This milestone reflects growing momentum around longevity science—an emerging field focused on extending not just lifespan, but healthspan, the number of years we live free from disease. Geviti's model moves away from reactive sick care and toward proactive health optimization, using continuous data, AI-powered tracking, and expert clinical support to keep individuals healthier, longer.

“We’re managing the full game—not just reacting when something goes wrong,” says Nate Graville, Geviti’s founder. “Our platform is designed to keep people in control of their health for the long run.”





A Membership Model Built for Long-Term Health

At the heart of Geviti's approach is a concierge-style membership experience that combines diagnostics, digital coaching, and white-glove care. Members receive at-home testing kits, AI-generated insights, and tailored supplement protocols, all supported by a dedicated clinical team.

This isn't reactive care—it's a high-touch, tech-forward system for optimizing health before symptoms ever appear. By analyzing biomarkers and health data over time, Geviti's platform helps identify risk trends and offer personalized interventions.

"We're applying the best of AI, medicine, and coaching to help people stay well—before anything breaks down," Graville explains. For users, that means longer healthspan, less guesswork, and better decision-making across nutrition, supplements, and lifestyle.

Why the Raise Matters

Closing an \$8.5 million seed round in less than 30 days is a rare feat in healthtech—and it signals strong validation from investors who see the shifting future of care. In contrast to traditional healthcare startups focused on treatment or diagnostics, Geviti is betting on prevention as the next frontier.

The company plans to use the funds to expand its team, enhance its AI and machine learning capabilities, scale its platform, and build strategic partnerships with clinics, researchers, and wellness providers.

A Fit for Arizona's Healthtech Future

Although Geviti is building for a national audience, its mission aligns closely with Arizona's emerging role as a health innovation hub. With a growing population of older adults, strong research institutions, and a rising interest in proactive wellness, the state is primed for solutions like Geviti.

From digital health startups to advanced biotech, Arizona's innovation ecosystem is increasingly focused on longevity, lifestyle medicine, and active aging—the exact intersection where Geviti operates.

The Bigger Shift: Preventive Platforms Are Rising

This seed round is more than just capital—it's a signal that health investors are shifting their focus from one-time treatments to platforms that optimize well-being over decades. As longevity science gains mainstream traction, companies like Geviti are well-positioned to lead that evolution.

INK'D GREETINGS IS SPARKING A MOVEMENT

How a Simple Card—and a Simple Idea—Are Creating a Chain Reaction of Joy

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

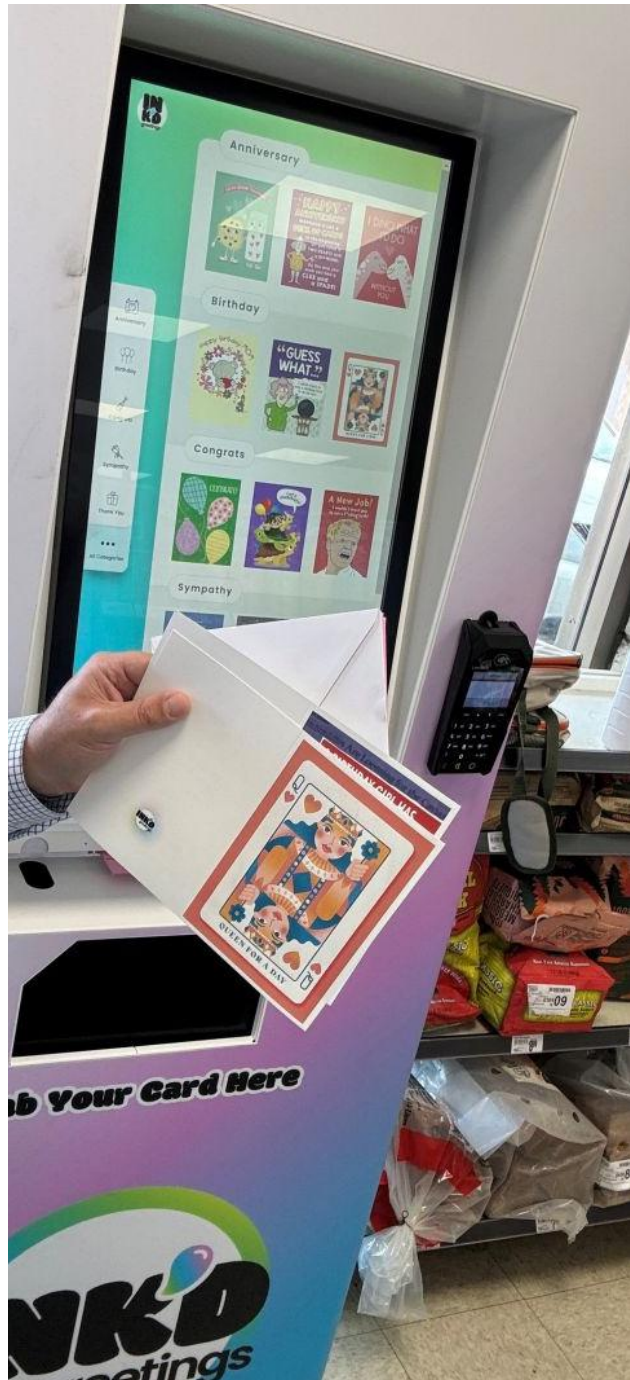
There's a quiet revolution happening in Arizona—one that doesn't make headlines, but changes hearts. It's not powered by code or capital, but by something even more powerful: kindness.


At the center of it is Ink'd Greetings, a feel-good startup founded by Andrew and Sammi Ekmark with one clear mission: make it easier to spread joy.

Their product? Greeting cards—modern, playful, and full of heart. But Ink'd isn't just about pretty paper. It's about connection. In a world that often defaults to DMs and emojis, they're bringing back the lost art of thoughtful expression—one card at a time.

Introducing: The You Matter Movement

Now, Ink'd is going bigger. With the launch of their You Matter Movement, the Ekmarks are turning simple gestures into a nationwide ripple effect. The idea is deceptively simple: Give people free cards. Invite them to do something kind. Watch the impact unfold.





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“We started this campaign to accelerate our mission of making it easy to spread joy,” said co-founder Sammi Ekmark. “And now we’re seeing the chain reaction unfold in real time. A small gesture can truly go a long way.”

Here’s How It Works:

- Pick a bundle – Choose from two themed card sets. Each comes with five adorable, uplifting cards.
- Give them away – Drop one off with a neighbor. Leave one on a stranger’s windshield. Mail one to a friend who needs it.
- Do the kind acts – Each card includes a prompt with three simple but meaningful ways to brighten someone’s day.
- Share the moment – Post about your act of kindness, tag [@inkdgreetings](#), and use #YouMatterMovement.
- Get rewarded – As a thank-you, the first 10,000 participants receive a \$10 gift card from Ink’d.

A Movement Already in Motion

Just 72 hours after launch, the campaign had already sparked over 16,000 shared smiles. That’s 16,000 reminders that people are seen, appreciated, and not alone. And this is just the beginning.

With a growing community and a growing mission, Ink’d isn’t just building a brand—it’s building a culture of compassion, one act of kindness at a time.

If you’ve ever wanted to make someone’s day—and be part of something meaningful—this is your moment. Grab your bundle, write a card, and let someone know: They matter. Because in a world that often feels heavy, Ink’d Greetings is proof that light spreads fast.

THE EMBLEM EFFECT

How a Former College Athlete Is Redesigning Private Equity with Spiritual Discipline and AI

By Kyle Macdonald, Editor-in-Chief

While many young founders chase rapid-fire success, Luke Aschenbrand steps into the boardroom with the calm focus of a seasoned athlete and the wisdom of a philosopher. At 25, he's quietly building Emblem PE—a revolutionary AI platform reshaping private equity and venture capital workflows. But what truly sets Luke apart isn't just the technology; it's the extraordinary blend of athletic discipline, spiritual presence, philosophical rigor, and entrepreneurial grit he brings to the table.

A former Division I offensive lineman at Princeton, Luke credits much of his leadership style and startup ethos to lessons learned on the field. "When you're in a winning culture, your habits are fluid. The camaraderie is seamless, and the principles carry over to business," he reflects, his eyes lighting up. Football instilled a framework for leadership that now defines Emblem's mission. "If I didn't have it, I wouldn't have been in a position to lead an organization with values and a vision that scales bigger than just me," he adds.

Building Culture Like a Championship Team

At Emblem, culture is no empty phrase—it's a deliberate, living construct. Luke and a handpicked team of five defined core pillars: candor, customer obsession, innovation, and teamwork. Every decision, every action must align with these values. "The purpose is to transform the lives of 5,000 firms by saving hours and uncovering insights that human eyes might miss. It's not just something to be used. It's necessary," he declares with conviction.

From Princeton to Private Equity to Tech Founder

Luke's academic journey is as diverse as his leadership approach. He studied philosophy and theater at Princeton, sharpening intellectual curiosity and performance skills. After graduation, he plunged into private equity and venture capital, quickly spotting a glaring inefficiency: teams wasted countless hours manually building pitch decks and reports.



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This revelation sparked the creation of Emblem PE an AI-powered operating system that automates these workflows, cutting task times by up to 95%. “We already made an ROI on the seat with one presentation,” Luke says, voice steady with quiet confidence.

Flow State: The Intersection of Athleticism and Entrepreneurship

Luke’s athletic career profoundly shapes his approach to leadership and performance. He describes flow state as the euphoric moment when presence overrides overthinking. On the gridiron, he was “streaky”—sometimes the best player, sometimes the worst. Golf taught him consistency. “Flow state is where the challenge is equally as difficult as it is fun,” he explains. “If you’re not present, you cannot perform.”

This mindset carries into building Emblem. Overthinking or rushing kills momentum; presence and trust in preparation fuel success.

Patience: The Virtue Behind the Vision

Luke’s senior thesis on patience informs his approach to delayed gratification—“being violent with your inputs and patient with your outputs.” Whether in sports or business, relentless effort must be balanced with detachment from immediate results.

“Most people rush and quit if they don’t get what they want right away,” he observes. “If you trust your inputs and are patient with your inputs, the end result will be greater.”





A pivotal moment came during a 2017 Silicon Valley trek where Luke met visionaries like Peter Thiel and Steve Wozniak, embracing the mindset that “anything was possible to build.” Yet post-football, he wrestled with uncertainty until he learned to ask: “What do I need to know? What actions do I need to take? How can I be present?”

Emblem: Solving Real Problems with Precision

Set for a major update launch in June 2025, Emblem automates and centralizes critical tasks for private equity and venture capital firms. It creates pitch decks, syncs data from multiple sources, and supports graphs, charts, logos, and team collaboration—an operating system built for capital markets. “It’s transformative,” Luke beams. “But it took a round of funding, new team members, and countless late nights—weekends included—to prepare for what we call ‘war.’” This team buy-in echoes the culture Luke cultivated, a camaraderie born on the gridiron and brought to the office.

The Highest Self: Balance, Discipline, & Presence

Luke defines his “highest self” as embodying balance, discipline, and presence—not just goals but daily habits. Even during intense work sprints, he maintains equilibrium through brief meditations, healthy eating, and self-care. “I felt like me in my own skin,” he says, a stark contrast to the chaos many founders face. To combat digital distraction, he uses tools like Brick to lock distracting apps, gaining hours of productivity and space for clarity.

Creators vs. Consumers: A Frequency of Consciousness

Luke sees society split between creators—those who build and add value—and consumers trapped in endless content loops. AI accelerates this divide, amplifying both productivity and distraction. His advice for clarity: “You are not your thoughts. You choose what to do with them.”

Luke Aschenbrand is more than a founder—he’s a model of modern leadership where athletic discipline meets spiritual presence and intellectual rigor. As Emblem gears up for its next chapter, Luke’s story offers a blueprint for entrepreneurs hungry to lead with clarity, resilience, and heart.

Learn more at www.emblem.pe or follow @emblempe on social media. To connect with Luke directly, reach out on LinkedIn.

DO IT SCARED: SAFER DINING WITH TRISTAN TIERCE

How One Founder Is Turning Food Safety Trauma into a Movement for Safer Dining

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor

For most people, dining out is simple. For Tristan Tierce, it used to feel like a minefield. Living with severe food allergies meant every menu was a risk—every bite carried invisible stakes. Now at just 23, Tristan is building a future where confidence replaces fear.

As co-founder and CEO of Allergy Voyage, he's creating more than an app. He's leading a movement—empowering individuals with dietary restrictions to eat safely, and equipping restaurants to serve them with confidence. The spark? A phrase texted to him before a life-changing pitch: “Do it scared.”

“Fear means it matters,” he says. “You push through it because the vision’s bigger than your comfort zone.” That mantra now guides everything—from investor meetings to platform builds. It’s the fuel behind a company solving one of the most overlooked problems in food service.

A Lived Problem, A Real Solution

Millions of people with food allergies feel excluded every time they eat out. And most restaurants still don't have the systems to accommodate them. Tristan knew that pain firsthand—and he knew the industry needed to change. “Food is how we gather and connect,” he says. “But for people with allergies, it often feels like isolation.”





That insight became Allergy Voyage: a platform that lets users filter menus by allergens, store preferences, and access real-time ingredient data. On the restaurant side, it provides menu tools and affordable food safety training—giving businesses a way to reduce liability while increasing trust and revenue. “It’s not just ethical. It’s smart business,” Tristan says. “Guests with allergies are loyal. They return again and again when they feel safe.”

From Studio Art to Systems Thinking

Tristan began college at Arizona State University studying studio art. A course on innovation helped him connect creativity with systems—and lit the fuse for what would become his company. He added a second major in entrepreneurship and joined ASU’s Venture Devils program, where Allergy Voyage took shape.

“The best startups solve problems their founders have lived,” he says. “That’s where clarity comes from.” Supported by mentors like Dr. Cheryl Drummond, Tristan transitioned from student to CEO—backed by a local ecosystem of advisors, early funding, and student talent.

The Right Team, at the Right Time

Knowing he needed technical strength, Tristan connected with CTO Jonathan Janowski through ASU’s global tech program. Though they’ve never met in person, their communication is daily and precise. “Meeting Jonathan was the luckiest and most important thing that could’ve happened,” he says.

Tristan built the rest of the team carefully—with clear expectations and role boundaries to protect the company’s culture and friendships. “You can’t build something this ambitious alone. But you also can’t build it without alignment.”

Building with Fear—and Purpose

That first major pitch almost didn’t happen. Tristan was anxious. He texted a friend. The response: “Do it scared.” It landed so deeply that he made it a mantra—not just for himself, but for his team. He sees fear not as a stop sign but as a compass. “If it scares you, it probably means it matters.” That mindset now carries him through product launches, fundraising, and speaking engagements. The work is hard—but the purpose is clear.



Scaling the Platform

With support from ASU's Sun Devil Hospitality and a mobile app launching in 2025, Allergy Voyage is rapidly expanding into new verticals—from universities to catering, stadiums, and global foodservice partners. “We’re solving a universal problem,” Tristan says. “And now we finally have the tech to meet the need.” The platform is free for users, with a growing menu database and real-time updates that adapt to supply chain shifts—essential for modern kitchens. The platform is free for users, with a growing menu database and real-time updates that adapt to supply chain shifts—essential for modern kitchens.

Leadership, Mindset, and Clarity

Like many young founders, Tristan has faced burnout, doubt, and imposter syndrome. What separates him is how he moves through it—with design thinking, presence, and community. He’s also vocal about Arizona’s role as a growing tech hub. “There’s brilliance in Phoenix, Flagstaff, Tucson. We just need to connect those ecosystems more intentionally,” he says. But his core motivation isn’t market share—it’s impact. “We’re not just helping people eat safely,” he says. “We’re helping them feel seen. Included. Confident.”

Foundership in Practice

Tristan’s journey is filled with lessons—some learned the hard way, some passed on by mentors. He believes the best founders solve what they’ve lived. They communicate with clarity. They build teams that complement, not mirror, their own strengths. And they push forward even when afraid. “Do it scared,” he repeats. “Let fear remind you that this matters enough to do anyway.”

A Safer, More Inclusive Table

With Allergy Voyage, Tristan Tierce is creating a platform built from personal experience—but scaled for global impact. One that helps businesses thrive, users feel safe, and the entire dining experience become more human. He’s not just changing what’s on the plate. He’s changing who gets to sit at the table.

Learn more at AllergyVoyage.com or follow @allergyvoyage on social media. To connect with Tristan directly, reach out on LinkedIn or email concierge@allergyvoyage.com.

FROM DISCHARGE TO DIGNITY: INSIDE NAVI NURSES

How One Nurse Is Rebuilding the Healthcare System—Starting at the Front Door

By Josue Romero, Managing Editor

At 21, Jasmine Bhatti stood in her grandmother’s kitchen, suctioning a trach tube with shaking hands. No nurse. No backup. Just instinct, exhaustion, and love. Her grandmother was dying of cancer, and the healthcare system had already gone silent. “We were on our own,” Jasmine says. “I would’ve given anything for one nurse—just one—to walk through our door.”

That moment changed her life. Today, Jasmine is the founder and CEO of Navi Nurses, a tech-enabled care platform reimagining what healing looks like after discharge. Built by nurses, powered by empathy, and growing rapidly, Navi Nurses is creating a new standard for in-home care—one where patients feel safe, and nurses feel whole.

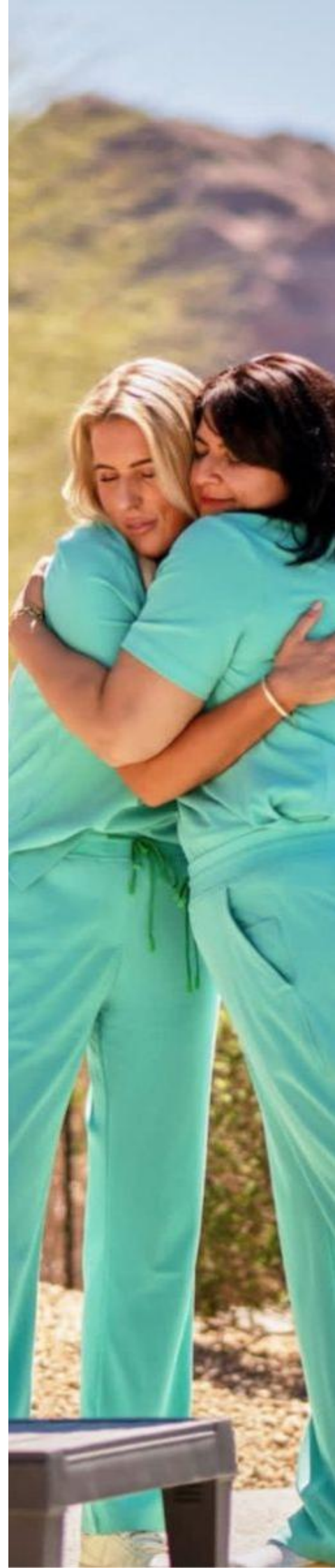
From Grief to Calling

Jasmine didn’t set out to be a nurse. But after her grandmother’s passing, she felt pulled into healthcare. She earned her RN and built a career in clinical excellence at top-tier systems like Mayo Clinic. Yet, the deeper she got into the hospital ecosystem, the more broken it felt. Then came COVID.

On Thanksgiving 2020, Jasmine lost a patient because the system was overwhelmed. Delays, chaos, and burnout had become normalized. That night, she cried in her car and ordered a book online: *Nurses Cry Too*.

“I needed someone to say, ‘You’re not crazy for feeling broken,’” she recalls. “That night, I knew I had to build something different.”

Shortly after, she received her first vaccine—and met her first private client. Navi Nurses was born.



Empowering Nurses to Lead Again

Navi isn't just patient-first—it's nurse-led. The platform empowers RNs to choose their hours, lead care plans, and work without burnout. Nurses on the platform often work just a few hours per week, but report feeling more fulfilled than they did in full-time hospital roles.

"We let nurses practice how they were trained—holistically, relationally, with time to think," Jasmine says. This autonomy attracts high-caliber nurses and re-energizes a profession battered by bureaucracy.

From Side Hustle to Scalable System

Jasmine bootstrapped the platform through ASU's venture programs, leaning on student talent for engineering, branding, and legal. Her early clients came from Facebook caregiver groups. Her co-founder left early in the journey, forcing Jasmine to rebuild from the ground up. "Sometimes people are only meant to walk with you for part of the road—and that's okay."

Today, Navi Nurses has over 200 active nurses, and in 2025 alone, it's delivered nearly 30,000 hours of care. The growth is steady, and the impact personal.

"We've had nurses tuck in patients at night. We've had them sit with daughters who didn't want to say goodbye alone. That's what this is."

Tech-Enabled. Nurse-Led. Human-Centered.

As much as Navi feels like a care company, it's also a tech company. The platform matches patients with nurses, manages scheduling and communications, and is building data capabilities to track outcomes and reduce readmissions.

"We're not just healing—we're proving what works," Jasmine says. In 2025, Navi secured a \$1.5M grant to formally study outcomes. The long-term goal? To make this model reimbursable through insurance. Jasmine is also exploring B2B partnerships with hospitals and payers to integrate Navi into the discharge process itself. "This should be standard. Covered. Expected."

Leading with Presence

The company's growth has demanded resilience. To stay grounded, Jasmine leans into the same healing she offers others—nature, mindfulness, balance. After COVID, she spent time in Bali, re-learning how to care for herself.

"I was surviving on pizza and grief," she says. "I had to remember what it meant to nourish my own body and spirit." That experience now shapes how she leads: softly, intentionally, and with space for others to grow. Jasmine Bhatti is building more than a company—she's creating a new standard for care.



MEET OUR TEAM

Get to know the builders, storytellers, and connectors powering the Silicon Oasis movement behind the scenes.



Kyle Macdonald
Editor-in-Chief



Josue Romero
Managing Editor



Shray Patel
Venture Research Analyst



Makaiah Gorhan
Venture Research Analyst



Josh Hanson
Venture Research Analyst



Sean Bair
Board Member

“

“We’re not just building stories — we’re building the community behind them. Every event, every article, every founder feature is powered by people who believe in Arizona’s future.”



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