

Amplify program inspires Sweatergang Companions to add personal care services

AS A PARTICIPANT IN LAUNCH LAB'S SIX-MONTH, BY-INVITATION AMPLIFY PROGRAM, SENIORS SUPPORT COMPANY SWEATERGANG COMPANIONS HAS DEVELOPED NEW SKILLS AND A RETOOLED FOCUS TO SUCCEED IN THE COMPETITIVE FIELD OF IN-HOME CARE.

From flexible in-home personal care services to ensuring companionship and stimulation via social activities, Sweatergang Companions strives to deliver comfort and compassion to those in need across Ontario. The company has rapidly grown and expanded to ensure as many seniors as possible benefit from feeling complete, safe, and most importantly, at home.

Sweatergang Companions was established in 2013 by Christine Wilson, who was inspired to provide seniors with friendship, proper care, mental stimulation, and an overall improved quality of life. Formed around the principle that companionship is just as important to the wellbeing of seniors as personal care services

are, Sweatergang Companions is passionate about reducing social isolation amongst seniors and improving their quality of life.

Sweatergang Companions does this by taking the time to listen to seniors' stories and genuinely take an interest in and create positive change in their daily lives.



FAST FACTS

Why Launch Lab

The Amplify program offers in-depth mentorship from Launch Lab's Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIRs). These seasoned executives offer decades of been-there-built-that corporate growth experience. To qualify for Amplify, companies like Sweatergang Companions have to demonstrate scalable growth potential and a team that divides management responsibilities.

Client testimonial

"BEING A LAUNCH LAB AMPLIFY CLIENT HAS BEEN AN EXTREMELY POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ME AND THE EXTENDED TEAM. AMPLIFY EIRS HAVE HELPED US UNDERSTAND WHAT IT TAKES TO REMAIN EFFICIENT, PROFITABLE AND CAPABLE OF MEETING EXPECTATIONS. IT HAS ALSO TAUGHT US TO STREAMLINE AND OPTIMIZE THE WAY WE OPERATE."

— CHRISTINE WILSON, FOUNDER, SWEATERGANG COMPANIONS

Future growth

Amplify helped to provide Sweatergang Companions with focus and ensure its team had the proper tools needed to make the right decisions. Processes have dramatically improved, as has business confidence, and the company has since created over 100 full and part-time jobs as a result.

"I had previously worked as a Healthcare Aide at a long-term care facility during my time at University, and I noticed that many of the seniors were experiencing a great deal of personal isolation," said Wilson. "I knew there needed to be tangible change as nobody should be left alone without companionship or support. Every senior is a loved one with their own stories, personal struggles, interests and needs.

I established Sweatergang Companions around the idea that we need to embrace our client's uniqueness and ensure that we are laying the foundation for each client and companion to establish a valuable relationship. As well, we do our best to ensure that our clients feel safe and comfortable with the situation.

Recently we expanded our service offerings to include Personal Care Services in addition to Companionship. This allows us to provide a holistic service for our clients, a one stop shop in the

homecare field. Despite the addition of Personal Care Services to our offerings, Companionship remains a cornerstone of our operations."

The decision to add Personal Care Services was made with the help of Launch Lab, a Regional Innovation Centre, active throughout Eastern Ontario. Launch Lab recently accepted Wilson into its Amplify program, which provides local business owners a chance to learn new management strategies and develop a series of business best practices.


"Being a Launch Lab Amplify client has been an extremely positive experience for me and the extended team. They have helped us understand what it takes to remain efficient, profitable and capable of meeting expectations," stated Wilson. "Among many other business practices, the Amplify program has also taught us to streamline and optimize the way we operate."

Amplify is a six month, by-invitation-only program within Launch Lab's advisory portfolio of services, delivering even deeper support to a select group of business clients who face specific growth challenges at a pivotal point in their business lifecycle. It focuses on helping these clients expand their services and overcome business challenges associated with finance, operations, marketing, sales and HR.

Working with clients across a variety of business fields that sell to both consumers and other businesses, Launch Lab's Amplify Program is delivered with the support of partners such as Valley Heartland Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC) located in Smiths Falls, Ontario. Valley Heartland provides entrepreneurs in Lanark County and North Leeds access to funding, training and mentorship to help them nurture their innovative, sustainable businesses. As a community-based, non-profit organization funded by FedDev, they invest in job creation, business and community innovation.

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**— CHRISTINE WILSON, FOUNDER,
SWEATERGANG COMPANIONS**



FROM A CUP OF TEA AND A CHAT TO MEAL PREPARATION AND OVER-NIGHT PERSONAL CARE, SWEATERGANG COMPANIONS' AIM IS TO ENSURE A WELL-ROUNDED, PROACTIVE SOLUTION THAT NEVER PUTS FRIENDSHIP OR COMFORT ON THE BACKBURNER.

"We've been helping to build entrepreneurship for over 30 years in Lanark and North Leeds, helping strengthen and grow the local economy," said Tina Stevens, Valley Heartland's General Manager. "Our partnership with Launch Lab and its Amplify program has allowed us to provide a valuable service to growth stage companies in our region. Sweatergang's success, starting in Lanark County and now expanding to other parts of



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"OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH LAUNCH LAB AND ITS AMPLIFY PROGRAM HAS ALLOWED US TO PROVIDE A VALUABLE SERVICE TO GROWTH STAGE COMPANIES. SWEATERGANG'S SUCCESS IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF THE TYPE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP WE STRIVE TO SUPPORT."

— TINA STEVENS, GENERAL MANAGER, VALLEY HEARTLAND COMMUNITY FUTURES

Ontario, is a great example of the type of entrepreneurship we strive to support."

From flexible in-home personal care services to ensuring companionship and stimulation via social activities, Sweatergang Companions strives to deliver quality care and companionship to those in need across Ontario. The company has rapidly grown and expanded to ensure as many seniors as possible benefit from social interactions, ensuring their daily needs are met and most importantly, being able to remain living at home. From a cup of tea and a chat to meal preparation and overnight personal

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care, Sweatergang Companions' aim is to ensure a well-rounded, proactive solution that never puts friendship or comfort on the backburner.

With a dedicated support team of Entrepreneurs in Residence (EIRs), the Launch Lab Regional Innovation Centre is focused on helping local businesses grow and succeed. Launch Lab is a member of the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, a provincially funded network of resources for self-starters. Operating throughout most of Eastern Ontario, Launch Lab helps foster new innovations and encourage local business growth, effectively contributing to the Canadian economy by acting as a support system, think tank and best practices educator.

By implementing a strong financial planning process, improving the digital marketing strategy while developing a more process-driven sales performance plan, the Amplify program by Launch Lab has helped Sweatergang Companions better understand the inner workings of its business.

"Before, we were more whimsical in our decision-making," said Wilson. "Amplify helped to provide focus and ensure we had the proper tools needed to make the right decisions. Our processes have dramatically improved, as has our business confidence, and we've since created over 100 full and part-time jobs as a result."

By streamlining scheduling, communications, forecasting and other managerial aspects, Sweatergang Companions has experienced a boost in productivity while ensuring expectations remain realistic. This has led to healthy growth, stability and opportunities for expansion on the basis of newly enhanced efficiency.

"Prior to joining the Amplify program, we didn't really set a sales and marketing strategy at first, or even set a financial forecast for that matter. Our focus was always on doing the very best we could do to help those in need," said Wilson. "With help from the Amplify program, we developed a deeper understanding of how we can do even more while maintaining our core commitment to companionship and top-notch support services. Amplify helped us become more focused and ensured we had the proper business tools in place to make the right decisions."

Sweatergang Companions is poised to grow exponentially over time as more residents in Ontario discover the benefits of their compassionate services. With the lessons learned from the Launch Lab Amplify program, and with the continued support of Valley Heartland, Wilson and her team are making proactive business decisions, enabling them to be better prepared for any new business challenges they may face in the future.

"Our processes have dramatically improved, as has our business confidence," said Wilson. "We feel confident and prepared to meet the needs of seniors across Ontario head on, now that we are operating with the support of a strong business foundation."

CONTACT INFORMATION

Sweatergang Companions
1 (800) 927-0985
www.sweatergangcompanions.ca
info@sweatergangcompanions.ca
[@sweatergangcompanionship](https://www.instagram.com/sweatergangcompanionship)

Valley Heartland
1 (613) 283-7002
www.valleycfdc.com
[@valleycfdc](https://www.instagram.com/valleycfdc)

Go to www.launchlab.ca for more great case studies



314 Bagot Street, Kingston, ON, Canada K7K 3B4
1 (613) 533-3300 | www.launchlab.ca | info@launchlab.ca
[f @launchlabRIC](https://www.facebook.com/launchlabRIC) | [t @launch_lab](https://www.twitter.com/launch_lab) | [in @launch-lab](https://www.linkedin.com/company/launch-lab)

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