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## **Nonprofit News**

# **Seeding social entrepreneurs in Charlotte**

**Premium content from Charlotte Business Journal by Todd Cohen**

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Since it began operating in 2005, Social Venture Partners Charlotte has enlisted 80 investment “partners.” And it has contributed more than \$500,000 to support and develop local social initiatives or nonprofits that address community needs.

To expand its work, SVP Charlotte is launching a competition to find and promote social enterprise in the region.

The effort, known as SEED20, will culminate in March, when finalists will pitch their ideas in a competition for a prize pool of \$30,000 contributed by Wells Fargo & Co. and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

“We wanted an efficient, compelling way to spotlight our region’s best social entrepreneurs,” says [Susan Daniel](#), executive director of SVP Charlotte.

SVP Charlotte is one of 25 U.S. affiliates of an organization launched in Seattle in 1997. Its partners consist of one- or two-person teams, each of which makes a two-year commitment to contribute to an investment pool from which grants are made to local nonprofits.

Partner teams contribute \$5,000 or \$2,500 per year, based on their ages, and all of them take an active role in supporting the causes that receive grants.

The initiatives SVP Charlotte has supported include the Nurse-Family Partnership, a program of the nonprofit Care Ring that provides home visits by nurses to first-time, low-income mothers.

To help expand that program, SVP Charlotte contributed \$55,000 per year for two years to support development of an expansion strategy and the hiring of a half-time fundraiser to secure funds for the expansion.

SVP Charlotte also launched a tutoring initiative a year ago for under-achieving students in three Charlotte-Mecklenburg elementary schools. That effort has been expanded to five schools this year.

Based on applications that must be submitted by Dec. 8, a selection committee for the new Social Entrepreneurs Empowered 20 competition, or SEED20, will pick 20 semi-finalists who will receive

seven weeks of feedback and coaching in January and February.

The selection committee then will select 10 finalists, each of whom will get three minutes to pitch their ideas at a public event on March 6, with three or four likely to divvy up the \$30,000 prize pool.

Other investors include UNC Charlotte and Topics Education, the strategic branding and marketing partner for the competition, which SVP Charlotte plans to make an annual event.

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