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**THE FIRST YEARS® PARENTPRENEUR GRANT PROGRAM AWARDS**  
**\$50,000 IN FUNDING TO SUPPORT BUSINESSES**  
**FOUNDED BY NEW & EXPECTING PARENTS**

*Ten Grants Awarded to Innovative Parent Entrepreneurs in  
Technology, Fashion, Education, Product Development and Service Industries*

**CANTON, MA (JANUARY 12, 2016)** — Recognizing that running or starting a business with kids in tow can throw a lot of unpredictability into life's journey, The First Years – a leading global juvenile products manufacturer – launched its inaugural **Parentpreneur Grant Program** in fall 2015. New and expecting parent entrepreneurs from across the United States were invited to apply for grant funding totaling \$50,000.

More than 100 applications for individual grants of up to \$10,000 were submitted by innovative parents who are running small businesses founded less than five years ago, and parents with new business concepts. These entrepreneurial pursuits and ideas are being developed and overseen by smart, savvy and creative new parents, all with at least one child under five years old. Today, The First Years proudly announces the 10 new businesses and concepts that will receive the \$50,000 in grant funding to help these parents make their dream jobs a reality.

"For more than 60 years, The First Years has manufactured juvenile products to help prepare new and expecting parents for the unpredictable journey of parenting, from stopping the food fights during mealtime, to soaking up the fun during bath time and providing tools for successful potty training," says Lynne Mello, Vice President of Marketing Communications for The First Years. "Our Parentpreneur Grant Program recognizes that running or starting your own business while also caring for little ones takes these daily parenting challenges to a whole new level. We were blown away by the innovation and creativity we saw coming from today's parent entrepreneurs, and were thrilled by the response we received."

Each grant program applicant was evaluated by The First Years judging panel based on the strength and validity of their business concept or plan, ability to demonstrate need and specify what grant funding will be used for, and ability to best express why their entity is deserving of funding through the application and related supporting documents.

"For the grant program's inaugural year, The First Years is proud to award funding to ten deserving businesses," added Mello. "We're excited to see how our grants will help these entrepreneurial parents reach their goals."

Following are the recipients of The First Years 2015 Parentpreneur Grants:

**BTR Woodworks (O'Fallon, Illinois) – \$7,000 grant recipient**

Brandon Rotz started his handmade wood projects as a hobby three years ago, and since then has experienced impressive growth with more than 15,000 products sold. With his 1-year-old son Jude and another baby on the way, Brandon is working to make his beautiful stands and cutting boards into a business that will become a lasting legacy for his family, passed down to future generations.

BTR Woodworks will use its grant funding toward building a website, purchasing a CNC router tool, sander and dust collector, and professional photography. [etsy.com/shop/btrWoodWorks](https://www.etsy.com/shop/btrWoodWorks)

**Handsocks (Glen Allen, Virginia) – \$7,000 grant recipient**

Casey Bunn (mom of 3-year-old Jillian and 1-year-old Charlie) created Handsocks to solve a problem – the need for long, cozy, sock-like mittens that keep babies and older children warm, as well as provide protection from scratches and skin conditions.

Handsocks will use its grant funding toward a targeted call and mail campaign to more than 750 dermatologist and pediatrician offices, and to send product samples to large hospital chains.

[handsocks.com](https://www.handsocks.com)

**Bytes for Bits (San Francisco, California) – \$6,000 grant recipient**

Michael Leeder (dad of 6-year-old Dylan and 4-year-old Connor) and his business partner Jim Tsiamis (dad of 11-year-old Grace, 6-year-old Theodore, 5-year-old Charlie and 4-year-old Jack) created an after school camp for elementary school kids that teaches the fundamentals of software coding. They provide a project-based learning environment, allowing kids to learn in a fun and collaborative setting.

Bytes for Bits will use its grant funding toward covering the cost of 19 existing Chromebook devices, and purchasing 23 additional Chromebook devices – enough to cover five classrooms and 120 students. [bytes4bits.com](https://www.bytes4bits.com)

**The Doll Kind (Berthoud, Colorado & Tickfaw, Louisiana) – \$6,000 grant recipient**

Victoria Farmer (mom of 2-year-old Anistyn and 10-month-old Madox) and her business partner Jackie Konczol (mom of 3-year-old Olivia) are in the process of creating huggable dolls with a mission to inspire children to be kind and give back. Each doll comes with a bag of heart tokens that are given away as an act of kindness. Plus, for each doll purchased a doll will be donated to a child less fortunate.

The Doll Kind will use its grant funding toward a first full production order of dolls, heart tokens, retail packaging, shipping supplies and photography. [thedollkind.com](https://www.thedollkind.com)

**Sitterfied (Maplewood, New Jersey) – \$5,000 grant recipient**

Andrew Lewisohn (dad of 3-year-old Alex and 9-month-old Quinn) and his business partner James Nascawen (dad of 7-year-old Chloe and 6-year-old Ethan) built an online marketplace that connects parents with trusted, friend-verified babysitters using the parent's own social connections.

Sitterfied will use its grant funding toward redesigning the parent user experience, adding online payments, and increasing the number of "sitter social" events to expand into additional New York City boroughs and towns in Northern New Jersey. [sitterfied.com](http://sitterfied.com)

**TENDEN (Grand Haven, Michigan) – \$5,000 grant recipient**

Todd Hancock (dad of 5-month-old Jeune) launched TENDEN to make quality handmade clothing and accessories in the U.S.A. Using his friends and his baby as inspiration, he hopes to grow his passion for fashion to bring joy to others. Look for the new TENDEN baby collection, coming soon!

TENDEN will use its grant funding toward purchasing a new sewing machine, website updates, studio rent, and purchasing raw materials to produce current products and the upcoming baby collection. [tenden.us](http://tenden.us)

**Curiosity Pack (El Cerrito, California) – \$4,000 grant recipient**

Lily Jones (mom of 3-year-old Matilda and 10-month-old Milo) delivers age-appropriate activity kits to inspire a child's love of learning while supporting parents' involvement in their child's education.

Curiosity Pack will use its grant funding toward printing and manufacturing materials for the packs, package design, packaging for retail sales, consulting with leaders in mathematics education, and testing products in classrooms and with families. [curiositypack.com](http://curiositypack.com)

**Joule (Shoreline, Washington) – \$4,000 grant recipient**

Ian Maddox (dad of 5-year-old Olive and 2-year-old Ani) set out to reinvent the idea of car ownership. Joule takes care of auto maintenance and management, allowing drivers to swap vehicles as their needs change or when the car needs service. If a user is driving a small car but needs to swap for an SUV, the Joule app can be used to summon the replacement and have it delivered in as little as an hour.

Joule will use its grant funding toward hiring a new employee, and a marketing campaign. [gojoule.com](http://gojoule.com)

**All Out Celebrations (Dallas, Texas) – \$3,000 grant recipient**

Jennifer Lothamer (mom of 3-year-old Will and 1-year-old Miller) and her business partner Sarah Brice Calver (mom of 3-year-old Jack, 2-year-old Lewie and 8-month-old Max) aim to provide busy parents the opportunity to easily create “picture perfect” memories with their children. Their curated boxes are filled with all the goods needed to make milestones fun, stress-free and unforgettable.

All Out Celebrations will use its grant funding toward purchasing a greater volume of products, creating new themes for their limited-edition curated boxes, and implementing a public relations and marketing strategy. [alloutcelebrations.com](http://alloutcelebrations.com)

**Petite Marin (Mill Valley, California) – \$3,000 grant recipient**

Rachel Schohn (mom of 10-year-old Nathaniel, 7-year-old Juliet and 2-year-old Theodore) and her business partner Melina Harper (mom of 7-year-old Tabitha and 5-year-old Miriam) are launching a sustainable children’s clothing line. They will offer both a ready-to-wear line incorporating vintage textiles as well as custom garments made from their customers’ own button-downs. Their eco-couture company will upcycle treasured garments into classic clothing for the next generation to enjoy.

Petite Marin will use its grant funding toward hiring a pattern maker to create patterns suitable for use to upcycle more garment types, to expand its size range offering, and for traditional and social media marketing. [petitemarin.com](http://petitemarin.com)

Please visit [thefirstyears.com/grants](http://thefirstyears.com/grants) for more information about the Parentpreneur Grant Program, and to see photos of each of the grant recipients with their families.

**About TOMY International**

TOMY International ([www.tomy.com](http://www.tomy.com)) is a leading global designer, producer and marketer of a broad range of innovative, high-quality toys sold to preschoolers, youths and adults under the TOMY®, Ertl® and Battroborg™ brands as well as products for parents, infants and toddlers marketed under its The First Years®, JJ Cole® Collections and Boon® brands. TOMY International also markets its products under popular licensed properties such as John Deere, Pokémon, Chuggington, Sonic the Hedgehog, Lamaze, Inside Out, Miles from Tomorrowland, The Good Dinosaur, Winnie the Pooh, Princesses, Cars, Fairies and Toy Story, and other well-known properties. TOMY International’s mission is to inspire and fulfill the dreams of children and parents worldwide. TOMY International reaches its target consumers through multiple channels of distribution supporting more than 25,000 retail outlets throughout North and South America, Europe and Australia. TOMY International is a wholly owned subsidiary of Japan-based TOMY Company, Ltd. (Tokyo Stock Exchange Code No. 7867). © TOMY

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