

## Startup Program Aims to Help Companies Develop Smart Water Solutions

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(TNS) — The second-ever class of water-technology companies in Hamilton’s Pipeline H2O program will “change the world,” Rahul Bawa, chairman of the board of the program, promised last week as those six companies gave presentations of their products.

Those presentations by the six firms were a significant upgrade from last year’s class, with more polished videos and slide presentations, and products that seemingly have the potential to make even more significant impact in improving the way governments and companies purify water, remove contaminants from sewage, help reduce water consumption, and use robotics to more quickly and cheaply inspect sewage pipes.

“We’ve got six startups that are gonna change the world,” said Bawa, who noted the program leverages the expertise of local companies, utilities, government agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to give promising water-technology companies the mentorship and advice they need to grow and improve the planet, especially in developing countries.

“We exist for one reason, and one reason only,” Bawa said of Pipeline H2O, based in the Hamilton Mill business accelerator. “And that’s to get them customers. I’m proud to say that every single one of this cohort has a customer that came out of that.”

As part of the Pipeline program, which runs from January through May, the companies evaluate each other to determine which two receive \$25,000 apiece for having the most impressive products, financials, and prospects. This year's winners were Drop Water of Menlo Park, Calif., which sells local tap water from machines that deliver the flavorful liquid in compostable containers; and GeoInteractive of Australia, which has robotics with high-tech visual and data collection systems that can help local governments inspect sewer pipes without sending people into the sewers.

Some of the companies, including GeoInteractive, plan to open offices in Greater Cincinnati after their experiences here.

Robert Lee, CEO of GeoInteractive, said he plans to have an office in Cincinnati's Over-the-Rhine, where Pipeline H2O had some of its meetings, but later will likely open an office somewhere in the region. He noted the company has potential clients for its robotic sewer examiners with the City of Dayton and Cincinnati's Metropolitan Sewer District, as well as a combined potential client of Butler County and Hamilton.

Lee's is one of at least two companies that are having their products examined by the U.S. EPA to verify their benefits. After that examination, "the EPA will educate the market for us," he said.

Bawa noted 75 people talked to or mentored the Pipeline Class of 2018, from consumer-products companies to people with expertise on business planning and financials.

"We leverage everyone in the region," Bawa said. "At the end of the day, we have a leading regional water ecosystem."

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