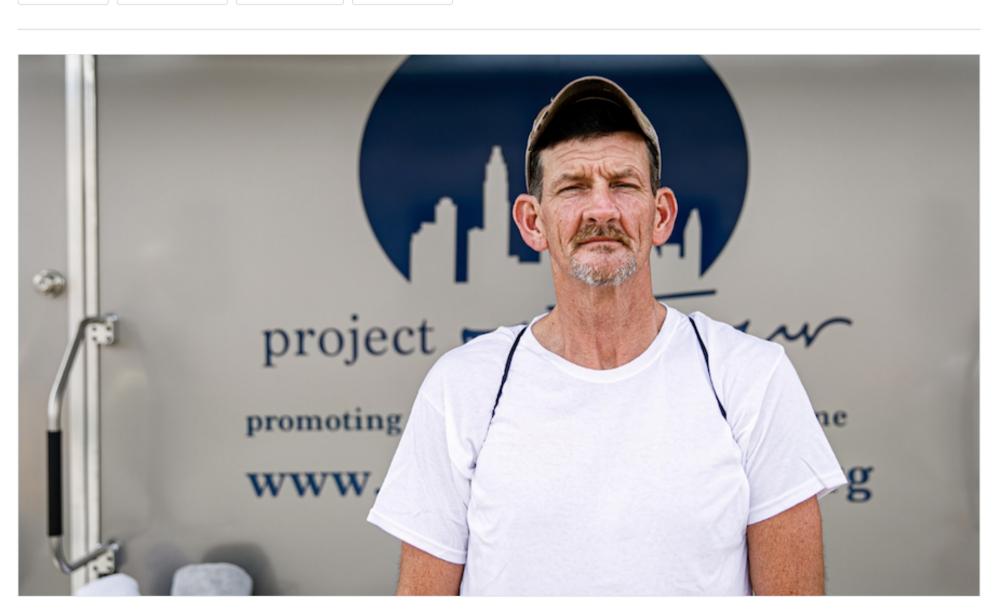
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5 Social Impact Startups to Watch in Charlotte

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Project Outpour. Photo Courtesy Project Outpour's Facebook page.

By Courtney Gabrielson November 25, 2019, 08:04am EST

Consider Lyft. Or Postmates. Or Disney+. Or whatever app or service you use to make things that used to take a long time — cabs/making dinner/Blockbuster — a lot quicker and easier. There's no shortage of innovative technology companies working to bring us into the future.

While these kinds of development are wonderful, they're only one side of the coin of progress. There's social enterprises, too — those entities that are less concerned with contriving modern convenience and focus instead on driving change for the better, in the most basic sense.

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Charlotte Inno - 5 Social Impact Startups to Watch in Charlotte

Charlotte is home to many of these kinds of organizations, which are in turn bolstered by a host of entities and programs. Consider Apparo, a local nonprofit that provides other area nonprofits access to education, tech services and other resources for "very small contributions," Apparo CEO Kim Lanphear told Charlotte Inno. "We are meeting a nonprofit where they are." And so far, Apparo has worked with 500 organizations.

There's also the Queen City chapter of Social Venture Partners, a group that aims to be a conduit between investors and the local social enterprises (there are 10,000 nonprofits in Mecklenburg County alone) that need their funds. These investors, dubbed "members," contribute annually to establish a \$350,000 fund, which is in turn doled out to seven chosen teams per year. The group is also behind SEED20, an annual event that brings together Charlotte-based nonprofit entrepreneurs.

The abundance of resource speaks to, at the very least, a burgeoning social enterprise niche in the Queen City. And to celebrate that, we've rounded up five social impact startups that are worth keeping an eye on this holiday season and beyond.

FASHION & COMPASSION

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It's the age of fast fashion. Clothes and jewelry are often made with ethically dubious or outright monstrous practices to keep prices low and option numerous. Shopping morally can be a minefield.

That's where Fashion & Compassion comes in. It's a faith-based boutique jewelry and gift store that partners with artisans in six countries across the globe. These women artisans, often economically or socially vulnerable, receive training to make their wares — which, in turn, become a source of secondary income and connection to other economic resources for them.

It's these pieces that Fashion & Compassion sells on its online shop and brick-and-mortar store in Charlotte.





1,165 scholars: That's how many girls who have learned practical technology skills through InTech, which operates in both Charlotte and Raleigh.

The programming it offers ranges from day camps to a full "InTech Academy," an opportunity designed specifically for high school girls. Regardless of the program, InTech is united by one mission: "increas[ing] the confidence in girls who are interested in learning more about technology."

In addition to hands-on skills, the Khalia Braswell-led entity also challenges its scholars to consider how technology and innovation can drive social change.

Open Broadband

Internet is something one can take for granted. But when it's missing, it can make modern life almost impossible. Open Broadband looks to fix the problem by bringing broadband to underserved communities, thus bolstering connectivity and opportunity to growth of all kinds.

It does this by offering hybrid fiber and fixed wireless ISP solutions, meaning that there's no digging up of streets or long wait times that are often associated with, say, cable or fiber.

And it's cheap, another element of its accessibility. In fact, most prices begin at \$40/month, without overage charges.

PROJECT OutPOUR



Project Outpour's mobile shower unit. Photo Courtesy Project Outpour.

https://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/inno/stories/startups-to-watch/2019/11/25/5-social-impact-startups-to-watch-in-charlotte.html

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Speaking of things majorly taken for granted: shower access. For the homeless, it's a real concern — one that Project Outpour looks to alleviate.

Thanks to an 18 foot mobile shower trailer, which includes two full bathrooms, users are able to enjoy a 20-minute shower. Project Outpour provides the necessary supplies, allowing guests to keep everything accept for the towels.

Another pivotal element of Project Outpour's offering is what happens while users wait: community building. The organization hopes that the approachable process of waiting for a turn to shower makes guests at ease, allowing for easy conversation.

It's all a part of Project Outpour's ultimate goal: restoring dignity to the homeless.

Pip & Grow



Pip & Grow. Courtesy Photo.

This Davidson-based startup has developed a portable and sustainable baby box for kiddos to safely sleep in. This year, it was one of six fall NC IDEA grant recipients, winning a piece of the \$300,000 funds.

That's not all: Pip & Grow partners with organizations like 90by30, which works to lower child abuse, to distribute its

products. There's also the company's emphasis on ensuring that those manufacturing its product pay their employees

fairly and "prioritize the environment."

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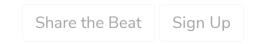
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