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Central Valley Venture Forum

Central Valley Venture Forum (CVVF) was founded in 2005 by Fresno State's Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Central Valley Fund, in an effort to address a pressing need in the Central Valley to increase capital investment in innovative ventures. The focus of CVVF is to provide entrepreneurs and businesses access to capital and relationships to support innovation, create jobs, and encourage economic growth.

CVVF was established to bring together investors and entrepreneurs in the Central Valley. Participants and attendees have included entrepreneurs, both successful and aspiring, along with venture capitalists, investment bankers, angel investors, valuation executives, corporate executives, and community leaders. In an informal setting, entrepreneurs—whether new or seasoned—have the opportunity to network with those professionals who may provide essential links to the development of a successful venture.

The daylong program comprises three components: guest speakers, panel speakers and the Valley Entrepreneur Showcase. Previous speakers include former eBay CEO and current Hewlett-Packard CEO Meg Whitman, and California State Controller

John Chiang. Panel speakers have included accomplished angel investors and venture capitalists, as well as a Hispanic business panel. Presentations made by policy officials and market leaders from the private sector and institutional investment communities focused on benefitting entrepreneurs and business leaders in attendance.

The Valley Entrepreneur Showcase, one of the three main components, offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to present their startup business to a panel of judges made up of potential investors. The Showcase has provided many entrepreneurs the opportunity to raise capital, gain visibility and generate support from both funders and community members. Showcase participants are not guaranteed capital investment; but the increased visibility and the time spent pitching their business in front of investors has led to business investments and development.



In recent years, many startups from the Central Valley have showcased their business at CVVF. The recent winner of the 7th Annual Central Valley Venture Forum in 2012 was the Valley's Grilled Chz Development, Inc. Grilled Chz opened its first store in Clovis, Calif., in March 2012, and took "Best in Show" CVVF honors in October 2012. Grilled Chz has garnered enough local support to open a second restaurant in neighboring Fresno barely one year after opening the doors of its first restaurant. Other companies, which have been showcased, presented innovations in energy, food safety, medicine, marketing, and social media.



CVVF has had strong backing from the Central Valley Fund allowing it seven successful years, with more Forums planned. The goal of the Fund is to provide private capital to small to mid-sized businesses within California's Central Valley. The Fund offers mezzanine capital to businesses that might not be able to obtain desired amounts of funding from banks.



Fresno State's Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Central Valley Fund continue to encourage the flow of capital investment into innovative ventures in the Central Valley. The results of these efforts will be on display in Fresno this October as the 8th Annual CVVF will bring together innovative ventures, strategic relationships, and capital investment opportunities,.

Tag: Entrepreneurship, investors, startups