

The Center for Advancing Innovation Honors Sheri Sobrato at NIH and Welcomes Her as Board Advisor



Bethesda, Maryland May 15, 2025 ([Issuewire.com](https://www.issuewire.com)) - On May 8, 2025, the Center for Advancing Innovation (CAI) hosted a landmark, invitation-only ceremony at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to honor philanthropist and impact investor Sheri Sobrato and celebrate the innovative startups launched through CAI's commercialization challenges, pioneered by Rosemarie Truman with NIH in 2012. The ceremony, titled "A Celebration of Philanthropy for the Public Good," spotlighted 15 impactful startups that participated in CAI's Sheri Sobrato-supported challenges to accelerate the path from breakthrough science to real-world impact. It was entirely free to all participants, including the presenting companies, based on generous support from the NIH Office of the Director, NIH Office of Intramural Research, and the Patent Law, Industry and Technology Transfer Scientific Interest Group.

At the ceremony, Sheri Sobrato was recognized for her visionary philanthropy and support of CAI's mission. Since 2019, Sheri has supported five of CAI's 12 challenges: The Brain Race, Innovate Children's Health Challenges I and II, and Global Health Innovation Challenges I and II. These challenges trained 2000 individuals in entrepreneurship and catalyzed over 150 startups focused on addressing urgent health needs around the globe. Since Sheri began supporting CAI, startups launched by CAI increased their funding 20 times and created 20 times more direct jobs, representing over 95% of CAI's overall impact.

CAI Founder and CEO, Rosemarie Truman, said, "To date, celebrated companies at the ceremony raised over \$74 million in collective funding. Winners of CAI's 12 challenges have raised an average of \$10 million, which is higher than the average funds raised by startups that go through other biotech and

deeptech accelerators. 60% of the startups are breaking boundaries and trailblazing to flex new models of entrepreneurial muscle to make a monumental impact for human health.”

Cody Locke, Chief Innovation Officer at CAI, added, “Over 90% of CAI’s challenge winners that raised money are still active, raising money, and creating jobs.”

Across all 12 challenges, CAI has launched more than 440 startups, trained over 4,000 entrepreneurs, and created more than 2,100 high-quality jobs. These milestones reflect the power of combining mission-driven investment, federal research, and entrepreneurial rigor.

Rosemarie shared, “Sheri’s fearless, courageous, compassionate and strategic support has propelled our challenges to new prolific heights. Her dedication proves how strong pillars of philanthropy, when bold and visionary, can transform communities and fuel systemic, sustainable, legendary change.”

The ceremony featured showcases from the following CAI-launched startups; their representative executives are in parentheses:

- **Aloe Therapeutics (Martha Sklavos)** – Developing a first-in-class, localized immunotherapy for hard-to-treat solid tumors
- **Appleseed Education (Kate Tulenko)** – Scaling up African nursing schools with an EdTech platform
- **Aptabridge Therapeutics (Taylor Cottle)** – Creating a next-generation drug design platform leveraging DNA nanoparticles for immunotherapy
- **Arkayli Biopharma (Seth Reno)** – Changing the treatment paradigm for infantile hemangiomas using an established drug
- **Couplet Care (Stacie McEntyre)** – Offering a postnatal unit medical infant bassinet and other tools for improving patient safety and clinical efficiency for newborns and parents together
- **Filterbaby (Xin Shui)** – Pioneering ultrafiltration technology to remove up to 99% chlorine from faucet filters for skincare
- **Fzata (Elizabeth Anne Smith)** – Developing oral biologic therapies to treat a wide variety of GI diseases and gut-health axis disorders
- **Heudia Health (Ed Connors)** – Connecting people in need with people who care using the AccessMeCare digital health platform
- **HueDx (Brianna Wronko-Stevens)** – Improving diagnostics with a portable chemistry and infectious disease analyzer for everyone
- **Intrimmune Therapeutics (Michael Nelson)** – Developing safe and effective options for food allergy sufferers
- **Jeeva Clinical Trials (Harsha Rajasimha)** – Making innovation accessible to patients by optimizing and decentralizing clinical research
- **MindArch Health (Nadine Wilches)** – Establishing a wellbeing research-based preventive program to decrease mental health risks and burnout
- **Nanochon (Benjamin Holmes)** – Reducing costs with a 3D printed, nanostructured material for cartilage repair and regrowth in joints
- **PigPug Health (Vitali Karpeichyk)** – Unlocking the potential of children with ADHD and autism through neurofeedback and AI
- **True Bearing Diagnostics (Tisha Jepson)** – Developing biomarker panels for early detection of various diseases and pandemics

Each of these companies, launched through CAI’s Sheri Sobrato-supported challenges, reflects CAI’s commitment to catalyzing science-driven entrepreneurship with societal impact at its core.

Following the ceremony, CAI is proud to announce that Sheri Sobrato has joined the organization as a Board Advisor. Her appointment marks an epic and powerful next step in CAI's efforts to scale innovation, expand access, and unlock the potential of underleveraged technologies and talent, matching extraordinary talent with opportunity, as Nick Donofrio would say.

"The Center for Advancing Innovation is one of the most effective and scalable vehicles I've encountered for translating philanthropic capital into lasting societal benefit," said Sobrato. "I'm honored to help CAI continue with their steadfast resilience, cutting through granite and making the impossible possible."

For a highlight reel from the ceremony, visit <https://bit.ly/caiatnih>. For recordings of the company presentations, reach out to CAI at info@thecenterforadvancinginnovation.org.

ABOUT CAI

The Center for Advancing Innovation (CAI) is a global public-private partnership, non-profit focused on creating a virtuous circle of innovation and driving growth breakthroughs through novel, creative paradigms and models. CAI's mission is to accelerate and increase the volume of technology commercialization to ignite entrepreneurship, bolster the global economy, and maximize the potential of promising inventions. CAI's award-winning challenge-based accelerator, rigorous evidence-based due diligence, and capital-efficient lean management models serve to hyper-accelerate "gazelle" high-performing startups for outsized investor returns. For additional information about CAI, please visit <https://www.centerforadvancinginnovation.com/>.

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