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**Small Businesses Thrive and Grow in Muncie**

On Monday morning, Mayor Ridenour addressed a packed room of Muncie’s best and brightest entrepreneurs at the Innovation Connector to kick off Entrepreneur Showcase Week. The brainchild of Ted Baker, Executive Director of the Innovation Connector, the week is packed with 20 events for local businesses of all sizes. Ranging from workshops about Quickbooks and creative marketing to networking opportunities, many of the free events filled up with registrations weeks in advance. For Ridenour, investing in the Innovation Connector is investing in the future of the City. “Muncie will grow because of small business and entrepreneurs,” said Ridenour, before presenting Entrepreneur of the Year awards.

2022 has been a banner year of growth for many new and expanding businesses in Muncie. The Chamber of Commerce has hosted 333ribbon cuttings this year, and welcomed 58 new members. Muncie’s economic upswing has supported the launch of new restaurants, clothing boutiques, service professionals, and everything from virtual reality to ballroom dancing.

The Community Impact Entrepreneur of the Year Award went to Tiara Hicks, who opened Rosebud Coffee House in the 8twelve neighborhood with the goal of creating a space for people on the south side of town to connect and create. “The support has been huge…everyone from local government to the mayor’s office to churches to nonprofits. Muncie is a very open community that’s looking for more,” commented Hicks on why she would encourage fellow entrepreneurs to take a risk and invest in their community.

Part of the support that businesses can receive comes from the Mayor’s office. Through a combination of grants, aid, tax abatements, and other allocations, Mayor Ridenour has overseen the distribution of $7.7 million to help new and established businesses put down roots in Muncie. For this investment in the long-term future of the City, Mayor Ridenour was presented with the 2022 Entrepreneur Support Award.

“It’s a good time for business in Muncie,” commented Ridenour. “We’re very proud of our local entrepreneurs, and excited to see them thrive.”