

THE COMMERCE CONNECTION

Brought to you by Venture Access, Harford County's dedicated entrepreneurial entity supporting entrepreneurs in their quest to successfully formulate, launch and grow profitable companies.

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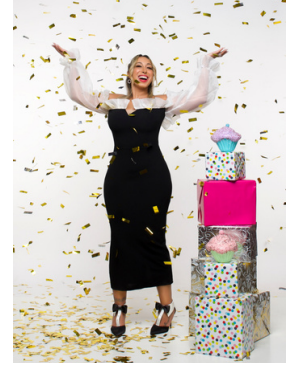
ENTREPRENEURS SHOWCASE
The Gift of Family:
Laila's Gift
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Welcome to the November issue of the **The Commerce Connection**, brought to you by Venture Access! This month we meet the Bailey family and their two brand-new businesses making a difference for children in Harford County.

THE GIFT OF FAMILY Written by Natalie Pixley

Every child deserves to be included and celebrated. This is something that Shari Bailey, founder of Zigglebee and Laila's Gift, knows firsthand. Shari is a mom to twin girls, Laila and Lana. When she was pregnant with her daughters, she learned that Laila had a heart defect and was going to need surgery at birth. After birth and 4 long months in the hospital, Laila was diagnosed with Jacobson Syndrome, a rare congenital condition, of which, at the time, Laila was one of only 100 known cases. Raising twins is no small task, and raising a child with special needs is even more challenging. Shari understands the difficulties of raising a child with differing abilities, and wanted to help other families in a similar situation.

In April 2022, Shari founded Laila's Gift, a nonprofit in honor of her daughter, that aims to celebrate the birthdays of children with special needs and differing abilities. Powered through the generosity of "Gifters", Laila's Gift aims to raise \$100,000 dollars to celebrate children's birthdays in 2023. Each party is customized to the needs and passions of each child and includes gifts, decorations, and party friends! Shari shares that she, "wants to take the burden off of families and make kids feel not only included, but celebrated in their community". You can become a part of a birthday celebration by donating your time or money to Laila's Gift [here](#).



Shari isn't the only entrepreneur in the family! Laila's twin sister Lana is also taking the leap into entrepreneurship. Lana and Laila share a special bond as twins, but that bond looks different with Laila's disabilities. Laila is non-verbal, so communicating with each other is challenging. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Shari encouraged Lana to do something creative instead of watching TV all day. So, Lana pulled out some paper and began writing a story. She stepped away for a few minutes and came back to find Laila drawing pictures on her story. Both Lana and Shari were thrilled to see Laila communicating in this way and this new bond inspired Lana to create Zigglebee, a book of stories with no pictures.



Follow Laila's Gift on social media!



VentureAccess
A Thriving Entrepreneurial Community



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Zigglebee is designed for children to put themselves into the story by drawing their own pictures based on the story's outline. Regardless of ability, race, or experience, each child can use their imagination and create a story based on their reality. Since its official launch in July, 2022, Zigglebee has not only helped children express their creativity, but has also helped them with word recognition, speech therapy, and so much more. A portion of Zigglebee's proceeds go towards funding parties through Laila's Gift. You can order a copy of Zigglebee [here](#).

Creating two businesses in one year is no small tasks, but Shari, Lana, and Laila aren't slowing down! Shari hopes that in the next few years, Laila's Gift can continue to grow and provide additional services and resources to families with special needs children. Lana has big goals too, planning to release new Zigglebee stories and launch a clothing line that is both cute and functional for kids with different needs.

You can join in the efforts by becoming a Gifter! Donate funds through their website or donate your time to celebrating kids through Laila's Gift. On December 17th, Laila's Gift will be hosting their Gifter's Gala at the Port Discovery Children's museum to celebrate their mission, gifters, and help them reach their fundraising goal. Tickets are available on [Eventbrite](#).



Follow Zigglebee on social media!



GET YOUR BUSINESS ON GOOGLE MAPS

Want your business to be found online? Need to figure out how to manage your business on Google Search and Maps? This is the workshop for you! Join Maryland's SBDC to learn how to connect with customers on Google Search and Maps. Join online on November 30th from 10:00am - 11:00am.

[Register Here!](#)



FINDING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

The pandemic and economic relief efforts have led to more grant opportunities than ever for the nation's small businesses. With the main federal relief programs now over, small businesses are seeking out other funding opportunities that may be available to them. Watch this [recorded webinar](#) from SCORE on the different grants available to small business owners.



READY, SET, GO!

Ready, Set, Go is a three-part business start up course in partnership with Maryland SBDC and Harford Community College. Each session will cover various topics including creating a business plan, legal business registration, finance management and funding, and more! This is an in-person course on December 7th from 9:00-11:00am.

[Register Here!](#)





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