



STARTUPS & INNOVATIONS

By Jasmine Spearing-Bowen

FUNDING

Grooming product startup **Twist It Up Comb** appeared on ABC's **Shark Tank** on Jan. 27, and received funding from **Marc Cuban** and **Daymond John**.

Founder **Noel Durity**, a local real estate broker and loan officer, searched for years to find a quick, low maintenance way to style his hair in the morning after seeing a YouTube video of someone styling their hair with a tennis racket.

He decided to use 3D printing to improve the design. After getting interest from local barber shops, he worked with **Tera Engineering Co.** in Orange to make a model that could be mass produced. Durity, a member of the Irvine chapter of startup community **Startup Grind**, launched the product in Orange County in 2016.

He said the company had \$500,000 in sales last year. The product sells for about \$25.

Cuban and John each acquired 12.5% of the company for a total investment of \$225,000, which Durity said will be used for production and marketing.

"My biggest thing is I always sold out, so I was trying to get production and inventory," said Durity. "The majority of the money is just to scale."

Irvine-based medical tech fund **MedFocus** contributed to a nearly \$3.5 million seed round for device company **Perfuze**. The Galway, Ireland-based company is developing catheter-based technology to treat acute ischemic stroke.

MedFocus is a group of private equity venture capital funds that specifically invest in emerging medical device companies. The Perfuze investment came from the HBM-MedFocus Fund.

Fund Principal Manager **Michael Henson**, a veteran of OC's medical device and healthcare technology scene, looks forward to working with Perfuze to bring their technology to the market.

"Perfuze has a simple, yet unique approach for the treatment of thrombectomy that we believe should provide faster clot removal from the brain, resulting in better patient outcomes, shorter procedure times and less expense," said Henson in an emailed statement.

The round was led by European tech VC firm **Earlybird**.



Shark Tank-backed product retails for about \$25



Henson: emerging healthcare co. vet

PEOPLE

Verizon-alum **Greg Haller**, chief operating officer of Irvine-based call center giant **Alorica Inc.**, has joined the board of directors of **Mobilize Solutions**, an Irvine-based ad tech startup that enhances mobile cameras with content including geofilters.

Mobilize Solutions launched in 2013, and opened a Kansas City, Mo. office last year. The company is investor-funded and raised close to \$1 million in a bridge to Series A funding in 2018.

It has worked with brands such as Hyundai, Toyota and Salesforce to integrate their branding into geofilters for events like the L.A. Marathon.

Haller joins other Verizon veterans **Marni Walden**, **John Harrobin**, **Mike Benvenuti**, **Brendan Fallis**, **Brian Jones** and **Nick Montes** on the company's board.



Haller: Alorica COO mobilizing

LAUNCH

Immerse, an Irvine-based virtual reality language learning company, took the wraps off the latest version of its app last week.

The **UCI Applied Innovation Wayfinder** startup's software pairs with **Oculus Go** VR headsets and allow users to meet up with native speaking tutors in real time in virtual locations around the globe.

Chief Executive **Quinn Taber** said the company is currently working with several large corporate clients in Asia who wanted a top-of-the-line English learning program for employees.

The company raised \$600,000 from angel investors in 2017 and is considering raising additional funds in the fall.



VR experience using Immerse technology

Irvine-based biotech company **Bioreigns** kicked off sales for a line of water-soluble products featuring cannabidiol, or CBD, a chemical found in cannabis plants, but which does not have psychoactive properties.

Products include **Limitless**, a CBD and curcumin energy support nutraceutical, a daily CBD tincture and a CBD sleep formula.

Chief Executive **Nick Arroyo** said the company's products will be available for sale through distributors.

"We're just trying to give the average person the opportunity to be entrepreneurs. I'm a huge supporter of entrepreneurship," he said.

Real Housewives of Orange County alums **Gretchen**

Rossi and **Slade Smiley** are working with the company as brand ambassadors, helping with marketing and product development.

Bioreigns is self-funded by Arroyo and co-founder **Bryan Reed**. They are currently headquartered at the office of Arroyo's other company, **Vantari Genetics**, but seeking local space to house administrative and manufacturing operations.



Arroyo: Bioreigns CEO



Five startups graduate from EvoNexus

Irvine-based **EvoNexus** graduated five startups from its business incubator last week, including **Abtum**, which produces radio frequency filters and other products, residential crowdfunding platform **Blockbuyer**, gaming platform company **Evasyst**, industrial component company **Integra Devices**, and AI chip manufacturer **Syantiant**.

EvoNexus Managing Director **Bob Genthert** said most companies stay with the incubator for an average of about two years.

"We're a victim of our own success with five companies leaving at once," he said. "We are actively seeking to bring new companies in."

PARTNERSHIPS

Irvine-based VC firm **Adventus Ventures** has inked a deal with Korean wireless communication company **OnFace**.

OnFace will invest in two Adventus healthcare-focused companies, **Alleveon Therapeutics** and **Pressao Medical**, while licensing those two OC-based companies' technologies. OnFace and Adventus will also work to co-manufacture additional products and work jointly to bring them to market.

The deal was facilitated in part by **Gumi Electronic Research Institute**, a Korean government-funded medical device incubator with \$110 million in backing, as part of an effort to help Korean companies diversify from information technology into med tech and life sciences companies and create local jobs.

OnFace and GERI will provide Adventus with resources to further develop and promote their technologies, such as Alleveon's **Allevx Smart** wrist cuff for tremor con-



Adventus execs with GERI delegates

rol and Pressao's **BP-Adjust** wrist cuff for hypertension control.

Terms of the funding haven't been finalized.

EVENTS

CAREER BOOSTS

Feb. 4-13, 2019

Compiled by Brian Alvarado

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 6

■ **SPARK: Level Up Your Business** (Orange County Freelancers Union), Irvine, 5:30 p.m., free, freelancersunion.org/spark

TUESDAY, FEB. 12

■ **Coffee at the Cove: Creating a Successful Company** (UCI Applied Innovation and OCTANE), Irvine, 7:30 a.m., \$35, (949) 330-6564, oc-taneoc.org/events-programs

■ **Develop a Winning Business Plan** (SCORE Chapter 114), La Habra, 5:30 p.m., free, (714) 550-7369, orangecounty.score.org

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 13

■ **Business Killers Series—Top Mistakes Causing California Businesses to Fail** (SCORE Chapter 114), Rancho Santa Margarita, 6 p.m., free, (714) 550-7369, orangecounty.score.org

■ **The Startup Hustle: Finding Customers** (CSUF Startup), Irvine, 6 p.m., free, (657) 278-3464, goo.gl/L5RMTK

RECURRING

■ **1 Million Cups** (UCI Applied Innovation), Irvine, every Wednesday, 7:45 a.m., free, (949) 824-2683, innovation.uci.edu