

Social Enterprise Gets to Incubatin'

Providence is, it seems, becoming an incubator for incubators. The success of organizations like BetaSpring, and the dire economic awareness that floats over much of the city, are leading to an embrace of the start-up. Long recognized, yet often little respected, as a primary driver of new jobs and financial recovery, the "start-up" now has more potential support than ever before.



External Relations Director Caroline J. Mailloux, excited about plans for the Greenhouse space

You may already know about the fairly long-standing Design Center downtown, which cultivates relationships between and workspace for design professionals, freelancers and start-ups. There's also BetaSpring, which takes an active investor/mentor role in the destinies of the start-up ventures it shepherds from its Chestnut St. location. There's Digital City, filling its role from within AS220's Merchantile Block as a collaborative space for cutting edge and bleeding edge digital artists and producers. There's the Hatch, right next to PPAC, with modernist meeting spaces, hosted hackathons and a variety of start-ups. Next door is Johnson & Wales' entrepreneurial innovation center.

The newest start-up niche to find a specialized home is the social enterprise. While social enterprise ventures may be for- or non-profit, they're characterized by a dedication to making the world a better place in some meaningful way, and generating enough income to keep doing so. You can expect a lot of green and healthy ventures to spring forth from this new location, fittingly called the Social Enterprise Greenhouse. Their first "Build Out Benefit" took place last week, amid ring-tosses, food, drinks and other games. They are raising money to build out and repair this prime space at one corner of Davol Square, where, in RI terms, Chestnut's Salon used to be. The organization started a few years ago and has built a broad base of involvement, evidenced by the crowd of supporters who turned out for the July 17 event. Learn more about the roughly 150 ventures the Greenhouse has helped so far, and about the

upcoming incubation space at segreenhouse.org.