

HARLEM

+ Follow harlemfocus



Harlem Focus is a blog with an eye on community, culture, art, food and life in and around Harlem. It is a Project of the CCNY–Amsterdam News Urban Digital Media Lab.

- [Contributors](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [News](#)
- [My Harlem](#)
- [Harlem Women](#)
  
- [Archive](#)
- [Feed](#)
- [Random](#)
- [Ask me anything](#)

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Email](#)[Instagram](#)

## Harlem Demo Day Crowns Winner, Encourages Uptown Innovation

Written by Kathleen M. O'Donnell  
Photo by Mike Street



Entrepreneurship runs in Gerrard Larriett's veins. Early in life, Larriett understood the profits of retail by selling bulk candy to his friends at school. But it wasn't just the money that drove him to obtain two business degrees and start his own company, it was the satisfaction and personal connections that come with growing a business.

Larriett was recently crowned winner of the inaugural Harlem Demo Day, an event organized to help local entrepreneurs pitch their businesses and walk away with a new network of mentors. On April 23rd, a small uptown crowd gathered at co-working space Harlem Garage to support four finalists, who pitched their business plans in front of an esteemed panel of judges. Larriett won them over with the investability, scalability and current success of his company, ***Gerrard Larriett Aromatherapy Petcare***. "The way I've structured the business is from my experience working for the biggest cosmetics company in the world and for a start-up in Texas. I know how to scale up," Larriett said.

With his line of scented shampoos, sprays and candles, Larriett focuses on calming dogs, cats and their owners during baths and storms. The inspiration behind his company? His childhood dog Dexter, who hated bathtime and his adopted dog Dada, who is afraid of thunderstorms. "What really makes us stand out is our wholistic approach to pet care," he said about his family of products, the most popular of which is the Pet Spa in a Box gift set. "It works with you and your pet's lifestyle," he stated.

Though he currently lives and works in Brooklyn, Larriett is a Harlem homeowner passionate about growing businesses uptown. He saw Harlem Demo Day as an opportunity to publicly reveal the brand and encourage local consumers to get excited about aromatherapy pet care.

Tasha Williams, co-founder and co-organizer of Harlem Demo Day hopes that the success of this event will be repeated many times over. Williams, along with other co-organizers including Yvahn Martin of ***Harlem Co-Working Group***, spent the last few months planning Demo Day and drawing on their personal connections at ***Harlem Garage, Silicon Harlem, and Pixel Prose Media*** for hosting and sponsorship of the event. Harlem/Bronx community bank, ***Spring Bank*** also got in on the Demo Day action as a sponsor. According to Williams, the next Harlem Demo Day is already in the works. She hopes this one will have a host of female entrepreneurs competing. "Just like we're creating a space that's welcoming and encouraging to Harlemites to come and pitch and learn how to be better pitchers, we want women to know that the space is just as amenable to them."

Williams founded ***TTW Consulting*** and offers project management and communications services to a number of small businesses and non-profits. She sees a big opportunity for entrepreneurship in Harlem, where she resides. "I wanted to do it in Harlem because I knew for years that although folks thought that gentrification made things possible, I thought there were some things that were always possible." She added, "There's this misconception that Harlemites can only create neighborhood-based business and limited scale businesses." Williams believes that co-working spaces like Harlem Garage are the future for new businesses in Harlem, "We had the people and the talent, but not the catalyst; that being the co-working space," she affirmed.

Larriett intends to continue work on his pitch for Gerrard Larriett Aromatheapy Petcare at Harlem Garage and use the connections made at Harlem Demo Day to scale his business. Janet Dickerson of event sponsor Pixel Prose Media stated, "We congratulate Mr. Larriett on being the first Harlem Demo Day winner, and are proud to have been part of this effort to support Uptown's dynamic entrepreneurial community."

"I'm really excited that we were at the early stage of his business," Williams said. "I think he has everything he needs to be a global success."


[Harlem harlemfocus startup](#)

Posted on April 28, 2014 0 comments 1 note

Share this

Like 2  
 Tweet 0

Comments



Add a comment...

Also post on Facebook
 Posting as Dakarai Larriett ([Change](#))

Facebook social plugin

Notes

1.  [goodaudience](#) likes this

2.  [harlemfocus](#) posted this

[Previous post](#)

[HARLEM FOCUS](#)

© Copyright 2014 Gastown Theme by [Pixel Union](#)