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**Press Release**

**Please note:
Under embargo until May 27,2019 at 7.40 pm.**

**Thus far only the Foundation Board knows that the amount of prize money is higher than usual.**

W.A. de Vigier Award 2019

**Double the Prize Winners For the 30th Anniversary**

Solothurn, Mai 22, 2019 **To mark its 30th anniversary, the W.A. de Vigier Foundation is awarding twice as many startups as usual. It awards ten prizes in total: five prizes of CHF 100,000 and five prizes of CHF 50,000. In the spirit of the founding father, Bill de Vigier, who saw the future in young entrepreneurs and continues to support innovative Swiss startups with seed capital long after his passing, part of this year’s prize money is contributed by former award winners who wish to give back to the startup ecosystem.**

When the W.A. de Vigier Prize was awarded for the first time 30 years ago, many of this year’s prize winners were just learning to walk. Back then, nobody was talking about startup promotion. Bill de Vigier, knew from his own experience just how important seed money could be and set his goal to pave the way for young, promising entrepreneurs. He was among the first to institutionalize support for startups in this country. For three decades, the W.A. de Vigier Foundation has awarded the highest endowed startup prize in Switzerland, independently and with no strings attached.

"I am particularly pleased that former winners contributed to this year's prize money. I hope that in the future our alumni will increasingly partner up with each other to help established companies remain innovative and pave the way for young startups to enter the market. In addition, it is in the spirit of the founding father Bill de Vigier to share the fruits of success with those who are just getting started," says Regula Buob, Managing Director of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation.

**Jury Invited 60 Startups to Pitch For the First Time**

There was another first in the anniversary year 2019: After a preliminary selection, the foundation board got to know 60 young entrepreneurs instead of the usual 16 startups. „ The ‚Selection Day Top 60’ gave us the chance to get an early sense of the ideas and, in particular, of the people behind the ideas. Our foundation places particular importance on the entrepreneurial personality because we need more pioneers in our country, people like Bill de Vigier. We need real role models who shape our society both with their ideas and their spirit," says Beat Graf, Vice President of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation. The "Selection Day Top 60" will take place again next year.

**These Are the Ten Winners**

***PXL Vision AG from Zurich (ZH) – Innovative Digital Identity Verification***

Identity fraud and the protection of personal data are huge challenges. PXL develops state-of-the-art computer vision and machine learning technologies for fully automated customer onboarding and identity verification using camera-based devices. PXL enables the creation of trusted digital identities which can be used to share personal data and interact in the digital space safely across industries.

***Scewo AG from Winterthur (ZH) – A Wheelchair That Climbs Stairs***

Scewo develops a wheelchair that allows the user to climb stairs and move more freely. Upon approaching steps, two rubber tracks under the wheelchair are extended. The chair’s seat is kept level at all time. The transitions on and off the stairs are automated. The software developers strive to increase the level of automatization, to help detect critical situations and to drive certain distances autonomously.

***Swiss Motion Technologies AG from Renens (VD) – Tailored Liners for Better Fitting Prosthesis***

MotionTech 3D prints affordable, medical grade prosthetic silicone liners. The liner acts as a soft interface between the limb and the prosthetic leg and it is of the utmost importance that the fit is perfect. After a prosthetic technician 3D scans the limb, MotionTech produces the tailored liner within 72 hours. The prosthetic field is only one of many future applications.

***T3 Pharmaceuticals AG from Basel (BS) – Targeted Cancer Therapy Using Bacteria***

The major challenge in cancer therapy is developing targeted treatments that exclusively impact the cancer. T3 Pharma does exactly that by using living bacteria that have the capacity to specifically find and even grow in solid tumors where the bacteria serve as efficient factories for therapeutically active proteins. T3 Pharma’s bacteria are a powerful and versatile platform for targeted cancer therapy.

***Vatorex AG from Winterthur (ZH) – Using Heat to Save the Bees***

The Varroa mite is a parasite that damages bee colonies in Europe and North America. Until now, beekeepers treated their bees chemically, which unfortunately also damages the bees. Vatorex uses the different heat tolerance of mites and bees. With a heating wire embedded directly into the brood combs, the bee brood is heated, which kills the mite. This treatment results in 31 percent improved development of the colony.

***Mirrakoi AG from Lausanne (VD) – Intuitive and Accessible 3D CAD Tool***

Mirrakoi makes high-end 3D design for industrial and product modeling accessible to everyone. XirusCAD, the brand-new 3D digital modeling technology developed by Mirrakoi enables designers as well as architects and engineers to create complex surfaces much faster and more intuitively than with currently available technology. The technology’s backbone is a fundamentally new approach to the mathematical description of 3D objects.

***Mobbot AG from Fribourg (FR) – Saving Time and Money with 3D Concrete Printing***

Construction companies can cut their fabrication and installation costs by 40 to 80 percent, thanks to Mobbot’s unique 3D concrete printing technology and its fully digitalized process. The production of expensive casting molds is completely eliminated, the custom-made elements are delivered in no time. Currently the startup focuses on underground concrete elements for electrical applications.

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***PharmaBiome AG from Zurich (ZH) – Rethinking Intestinal Therapy***

The microbiome is involved in a majority of chronic diseases related to metabolism and the immune system. PharmaBiome established a proprietary technology to isolate, culture and characterize gut microbes. Based on their functional interaction, the startup formulates them into pharmaceutical grade mixed cultures to sustainably modulate the gut’s microbiome and thereby treat microbiome-linked diseases.

***Piomic Medical AG from Zurich (ZH) – Wearable Wound Healing Device***

Piomic develops a wearable medical device for the treatment of hard-to-heal wounds. Acceleration of wound healing processes reduces pain, the risk of wound infections and increases the quality of life in patients suffering from chronic wounds. The unique energy-based technology is portable, easy-to-use and fits seamlessly into the workflow of healthcare professionals.

***Sleepiz AG from Zurich (ZH) – Medical Sleep Monitoring From Home***

With Sleepiz’ solution patients can get medically tested for sleep disorders in the comfort of their own home. The touchless device captures vital signs and sleep environment data in real-time with medical grade accuracy using an AI algorithm. The cloud-based solution saves time and money, therefore a higher number of patients can be screened for sleep disorders in a more efficient way.

**About the W.A. de Vigier Award**

The W.A. de Vigier Award is the oldest and highest endowed prize for startups in Switzerland, giving away five awards of CHF 100,000.00 each. Over the past 30 years, the foundation has distributed over CHF 11 million of seed money. The results are over 90 flourishing startups, successful IPOs, multiple company exits and above all, many newly created jobs.

The following aspects are relevant for the evaluation of the projects: The entrepreneurial personality, the degree of innovation, the value for society as a whole, the technical and financial viability, market prospects and the potential for job creation.

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**Contact details for questions**

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