**Press Release**

W.A. de Vigier Awards 2020

**Majority of Top 10 Are Cleantech Startups**

Solothurn, May 19, 2020. **From 192 submitted projects, the jury picked their Top 16 in February. The 16 were assessed and presented their ideas to the Foundation Board, who now chose the Top 10. Six out of the ten startups are Cleantech companies, a reflection of the high percentage of submissions by this sector this year. In the run for a W.A. de Vigier Award, the personality of the CEO is equally important as the groundbreaking product. On June 10, five young leaders will receive the W. A. de Vigier Award, each endowed with CHF 100,000.00.**

„There’s no question how much value startups generate for our Swiss economy and worldwide. Our foundation is extremely proud to be able to support these startups, especially in challenging times like these. In fact, supporting startups is currently more important than ever“, says Daniel Borer, member of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation Board.

"It’s evident that our generation has urgent environmental problems to solve. This is reflected in the particularly high number of Cleantech startups running for our awards this year. Instead of taking high-paying jobs at established organizations, these brilliant young minds take action and decide to have a bigger impact by becoming entrepreneurs and turning promising technologies into tangible solutions for us all," says Regula Buob, Managing Director of the W.A. de Vigier Foundation. "That obviously also applies to startup founders in other sectors and it’s truly a privilege work with these bright, strong and just all around fine young leaders“, continues Buob.

**These are the Top 10 (in alphabetical order)**

***Annaida Technologies AG from Lausanne (VD) - Non-Invasive Embryo Screening for Better IVF Outcomes***

Fertility clinics are under pressure to fulfill their patients’ wish of having a baby. Annaida is developing a device that supports doctors in choosing the most viable embryo non-invasively.

The clinics they work with will be proud to serve their patients with the most advanced technology, resulting in happy families and heartfelt referrals.

***Bloom Biorenewables AG from Marly (VD) –Sustainable Alternatives to Fossil-Based Molecules***

Petroleum is found in most everyday products which hurts our environment. Bloom found a way to turn wood and agricultural waste into renewable materials that fully replace petroleum. Thanks to this solution, companies have a green and locally available alternative, reach eco-conscious customers, meet government guidelines, save on C02 taxes and help tackle climate change.

***DePoly AG from Sion (VD) – Profitable PET Recycling with Eco-Friendly Chemicals***

The current recycling system destroys tons of composite PET plastic every year. DePoly turns the low valued post-consumer PET waste into its high valued original chemical components that can be remade into virgin plastic. This solution turns waste into revenue while contributing to a cleaner environment.

***EH Group Engineering AG from Prangins (VD) - Innovative Fuel Cell Technology for Clean Energy***

Hydrogen power would be a strong and clean power source but it’s been too expensive, too complex and too unreliable to be widely used in the market. At EH Group we developed a technology that harnesses the power of hydrogen in a compact, reliable way at low cost and minimal initial investment. Thanks to our solution, major manufacturers in the automotive, aviation and maritime industries get way ahead of their competitors in innovating towards a greener future – the only future we have.

***FenX AG from Zurich (ZH) – Sustainable High-Performance Insulation for the Building Industry***

When choosing insulation materials, the building industry has to compromise on either price, flammability or ecological impact. At FenX we found a way to turn industrial waste into handy and high-performance insulation panels that are safe, non-flammable and have a minimal carbon footprint. With this solution our clients can have it all: they get excellent insulation, fulfill all the market requirements in terms of safety and green labels - all at a low cost.

***MEMBRASENZ Ltd. from Ecublens (VD) – Membranes for More Efficient Hydrogen Production***

While hydrogen is a clean energy carrier, it is expensive to produce because it requires a lot of electricity. MEMBRASENZ developed membranes that cut these electricity costs for environmentally friendly methods of hydrogen production. Thanks to their membranes, their clients' electrolysers significantly outperform their competitors' devices in terms of electricity use. This solution supports the breakthrough of green hydrogen technology.

***Microcaps AG from Zurich (ZH) – Precise Microencapsulation on an Industrial Scale***

Making sure that drugs are released in the affected part of the body and at a specific rate is a huge challenge, because the size of the capsules that deliver these active ingredients is uncontrollable. At Microcaps we developed a patented technology that enables the size control of these microcapsules with Swiss precision, hence they all behave exactly the same. This means we can directly tailor and predict the release profile of a drug. Our solution is also highly relevant for fragrances, flavors and probiotics.

***Oxara AG from Zurich (ZH) - Transforming Excavation Materials Into Sustainable Building Products***

Every building project starts with digging out tons of dirt and there is not enough landfill space for this excavation waste. Plus, there is a shortage of concrete needed for building.

Oxara developed a chemical mixture that turns excavation waste into eco-friendly building material.This saves the building industry millions in landfill costs and provides it with enough sustainable material for construction.

***REA from Lausanne (VD) – A Smart Pad for At-Home Preterm Birth Diagnostics***

Most pregnant women who are at risk of preterm birth are hospitalized but end up giving birth at term. Rea develops a smart panty liner that analyzes vaginal secretions and alerts the doctor via app if the mom-to-be has to go to the hospital. This solution allows the pregnant woman to be monitored in the comfort of her own home, sparing her from potentially months of unnecessary hospital stays and overtreatment with medications.

***Sevensense Robotics AG from Zurich (ZH) – Turning Manual Ground Machines Into Mobile Robots***

Many mobile machine manufacturers struggle to take their products to the next level of automation, because they lack the necessary expertise in robotics. Sevensense developed a ready to use solution that turns manual machines into self-driving robots. This catapults their customers to the forefront of the highly competitive robotics market at a fraction of the time and cost.

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

The W.A. de Vigier Award is the most established prize for young entrepreneurs in Switzerland. With the annual prize money of CHF 500,000 (five equal prizes at CHF 100,000 each), these awards rank among the most highly endowed startup prizes in Switzerland. Over the past 31 years, the foundation has distributed over CHF 11 million in seed money across all sectors. 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 high degree of innovation, the value for society as a whole, the technical and financial viability, market prospects and the potential for job creation.

**Contact details for questions**

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