



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

West Michigan Entrepreneurs Receive Funding and Support Needed for Accelerating Growth

Creative Byline and Plumstone, LLC Receive Funding from Grand Angels; Business Development Support from WMSTI

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., Feb. 2, 2009 – The West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative today announced that two of its clients, **Creative Byline** and **Plumstone**, have been awarded second-round and first-round funding, respectively, from the Grand Angels to help cover business development and manufacturing costs. Amounts were not disclosed.

The Grand Angels is a group of private investors and experienced entrepreneurs whose investments of capital help to create jobs and business opportunities. The Grand Angels invest in early-stage companies and growing ventures in West Michigan, particularly in Ottawa, Muskegon and Kent counties. The funding investments in Creative Byline and Plumstone, bring Grand Angels' portfolio to 11 active, and 14 total companies.

Typical seed investment ranges from \$250,000 up to \$2 million, depending on the qualifications met by the company. The investments in Creative Byline and Plumstone mark the Grand Angels 10th and 14th investment in companies, respectively.

As part of its mission, the West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative provides entrepreneurs in the region with commercialization and new business development services. In 2008 alone, the Initiative provided counsel to more than 300 entrepreneurs, small businesses and inventors.

"When an entrepreneur comes to the Initiative, we help to support their ideas and work with them to develop a roadmap for their new business," said Linda Chamberlain, executive director of the West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative. "Once they have a validated value proposition to develop into a business case, we will connect them with the other resources in our community and give them the continued support they need to become a sustainable economic success."

Creative Byline is a Holland-based online service company that connects writers to book publishers seeking content. Writers can securely upload their manuscripts and submit their work to publishers who, in turn, are able to seek out new manuscripts and identify undiscovered talent. Brad MacLean, CEO of Creative Byline, said the funding will help expand the web site (www.creativebyline.com), including the addition of a social networking feature dedicated to writers. WMSTI also helped Creative Byline secure financial support through the Michigan Pre-Seed Capital Fund, making Creative Byline the only West Michigan-based company to receive an investment through the fund to date.

Creative Byline provides a first reader, who reviews each submission to ensure it is ready to be reviewed by an editor of the writer's choice. When a manuscript is submitted, Creative Byline guarantees a response from the chosen editor within three weeks, after which the writer can choose to submit their manuscript to another editor. The review and submission process costs \$19 for a full-length manuscript and \$9 for children's books. Publishers using the system include Dutton's Children's Books (Penguin Group, USA), St. Martin's Press (MacMillan), Globe Pequot Press and Wilderness Press.

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“For writers, Creative Byline is the end of the black hole often experienced when submitting a manuscript to publishers. For editors, it's to better manage the workload and avoid manuscript overload. And for publishers, it's a system that organizes incoming talent and provides a way to efficiently manage editors' time,” said MacLean. “This new funding allows us to move Creative Byline one step closer to becoming *the* online marketplace for creative media - a place where writers are able hone their craft and publishers are able to find quality and marketable stories and book ideas.”

Plumstone is committed to producing garden products that meet necessity with simplicity and style. The company's initial products are SunStick® and SunStick Home®. These patented products measure the amount of light a given location receives so homeowners can plant in the right place the first time. According to Plumstone's founders, Cynthia VanRenterghem and Kerry VerMeulen, the recent investment will fund a major production run and nation-wide marketing efforts.

“In order to grow beautiful, healthy plants, you really need to know and adjust how much light your plants receive throughout the day. SunStick and SunStick Home provide that information in a simple and accurate measuring device” said VerMeulen.

SunStick® bridges the gap between knowing how much sunlight plants needs and how much sunlight a yard receives. After just one day in the yard, SunStick will define an area as Full Shade, Part Shade, Part Sun and Full Sun, matching the right plant to the right spot. SunStick retails for \$9.99 and comes with three single-use meters; refill packs are offered as well. SunStick Home® is a similar product, but used for interior spaces. It measures light intensity for optimal houseplant placement and matches the light needs of a houseplant with the correct space. SunStick Home retails for \$7.99. Both products are currently available at www.gosunstick.com.

“When we developed the idea for the SunStick, we didn't realize the wealth of resources and knowledge that are available in our own backyard,” added VerMeulen. “Not only were we able to receive business counsel from the Initiative, but we were introduced to and able to work with local engineers and manufacturers to bring our products to market.”

VerMeulen's experience is not unusual, according to Chamberlain.

“West Michigan is home to many of the high-quality resources that entrepreneurs need to be successful,” she said. “The knowledge and expertise to turn a concept into a product reality are all right here!”

For information on the services the West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative provides to entrepreneurs, visit www.wmsti.org.

About Plumstone

Plumstone is dedicated to helping people discover their gardening potential and making the gardening experience less costly and more fruitful. The company's initial products include SunStick® for use in outdoor gardens, and SunStick Home® for use with houseplants. For more information, visit www.gosunstick.com.

About Creative Byline

Creative Byline is a Web-based service that provides a connection for writers, editors and publishers. Launched in December 2007, Creative Byline helps writers find editors interested in their topics to review their work and track their responses, and allows publishers to review and select edited manuscripts to fill their publishing needs. For more information, visit www.creativebyline.com.

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About Grand Angels

The mission of Grand Angels is to utilize its financial, intellectual and networking capital to promote the success of young growing companies and to enhance the economic development of West Michigan. Members invest as individuals and not as a group fund. Grand Angels is a member of the Angel Capital Alliance. For more information, visit www.grandangels.org.

About West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative

The West Michigan Science & Technology Initiative is a partnership among Grand Valley State University, Van Andel Research Institute, the City of Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Community College, The Right Place, Inc., and health care providers and educators. The Initiative is dedicated to creating an environment that advances innovation and supports the commercialization of life science and technology. Since its inception, the Initiative has assisted more than 300 clients in commercialization of new products, including funding through receipt of more than \$9 million in federal and state grant awards. For more information, please visit www.wmsti.org.

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Editors note: Product images and company logos available upon request.

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