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Venture Well Announces First Investment

Green materials company Whole Tree, Inc. to be first recipient of newly incorporated LLC

Hadley, Mass.—April 16, 2010—Today, Venture Well LLC announced that Whole Tree, Inc., an innovative green materials company using technology licensed from Baylor University, closed on its first external funding round. The investment was led by Venture Well, an initiative founded in 2008 by the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) to provide venture development and seed investment to emerging innovators at top U.S. universities who are creating scalable, market-oriented solutions to social and environmental problems.

Venture Well focuses on opportunities that are capital-efficient and led by student, post-doc and faculty innovators. In 2009, Venture Well provided financial and advisory support to a cohort of nine teams doing research in the green materials, energy efficiency and medical device sectors. These ventures have gone on to raise significant capital from business plan competitions, grant funding agencies and equity investors.

For its first direct investment, VentureWell selected Whole Tree, a company that is transforming lives through engineering solutions created from natural resources. The initial family of products makes use of coconut husks to produce patent-pending composite materials, initially for the automotive industry. The company is developing additional materials that similarly turn low-value agricultural waste products into higher-value—and higher-quality—replacements for high volume petrochemical-derived products.

“We are pleased to be the first recipient of Venture Well LLC funding and to continue our relationship with Venture Well and the NCIIA,” said Blake Mosher, Executive Vice President of Whole Tree. “This investment round will bolster our efforts to continue to produce innovative and eco-friendly technologies that exceed the standards of current petrochemical materials.”

Whole Tree has a longstanding relationship with the NCIIA. The company leveraged a grant to a Baylor University team to develop its technology and form Whole Tree. The company has benefited from venture accelerator training provided by the NCIIA and was one of nine teams selected to take part in the inaugural Venture Well Forum, an annual, intensive daylong meeting during which each participating team has the opportunity to connect with investors and advisors.

Whole Tree illustrates the trajectory of an early stage company with active university student engagement blossoming into a venture with large-scale commercial potential.

About Venture Well

Venture Well was founded in 2008 as an initiative of the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance to foster and support select ventures that can lead to improvements in human health and environmental sustainability. Venture Well shepherds university innovation from research to market, working closely with university researchers—students, post-docs and faculty—to help them engage in this transformative process. Each year Venture Well invites a select number of researchers to join Venture Well and work with its network of advisors. Investments are made in select ventures by aligned seed stage investors and also through Venture Well LLC. Venture Well is currently focused on capital efficient opportunities in green materials and on innovations in energy efficiency, from solar to software. For more information, please visit: <http://www.venturewell.org>.

About Whole Tree Inc.

Whole Tree Inc. aims to create innovations utilizing natural resources such as coconuts; benefiting those in need; stewarding the planet's precious resources; and helping clients achieve their sustainability objectives. Its research team, working collaboratively with Dr. Walter Bradley and his group at Baylor University, has developed a non-woven fabric composite using up to 80 percent coconut fiber as a seamless replacement for the 100-percent petroleum based synthetic fibers currently in use. With a number of natural composite material innovations yet to come, Whole Tree is positioned at the forefront of sustainable materials with applications for the automotive, construction, manufacturing, and packaging industries. For further information, please visit <http://www.wholetreeinc.com>

About The NCIIA

The National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) achieves positive and sustainable social and environmental impact through technological innovation by providing end-to-end service grants, mentoring and other experiential resources to higher education institutions. With support from The Lemelson Foundation, the National Science Foundation and a membership of nearly 200 colleges and universities from all over the United States, the NCIIA engages more than 5,000 student entrepreneurs each year, leveraging their respective campuses as working laboratories and incubators for businesses and ultimately helping them to bring their concepts to commercialization. For more information, please visit <http://www.nciia.org>.