



Rewilding Acres and EcoShip win 2022 BOOST Awards for Midwestern innovation from Delta Institute

2022 BOOST Awards held on October 27th invested \$12,000 in four sustainability-focused Midwest entrepreneurs to solve regional environmental and economic issues

CHICAGO, IL, USA, November 2, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Last week two sustainability-focused

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Bill Schleizer, CEO, Delta Institute

start-ups, Rewilding Acres and EcoShip, each won the \$5,000 annual BOOST award—hosted by Midwest-focused nonprofit Delta Institute and their Delta Emerging Leaders associate board. This year’s event is now available as [video on demand \(YouTube\)](#).

Since its inception in 2012, BOOST (Building Opportunities for Original and Sustainable Thinking) has invested in Midwestern start-ups ranging from local composting businesses, biodegradable hair products designed for Black women, regenerative agriculture farming, an

accessible repair-and-share tool library, a zero-waste grocer, and many more innovative approaches to reduce the region’s carbon footprint while addressing key environmental issues.

“BOOST directly invests in those who are passionate about sustainability—and just need that extra ‘boost’ to take their start-up to the next level of impact,” said William (Bill) Schleizer, CEO of Delta Institute. “We’re thrilled to have hundreds of attendees casting their votes each year, continually building innovation and entrepreneurship in the Midwest.”

BOOST serves as a platform for early-stage entrepreneurs with innovative products and services to provide sustainable change in the Midwest. During the BOOST event, attendees at the pitch fest vote for their favorite entrepreneurs and the winners receive \$5,000 grants to invest in their sustainability-focused work in the Midwest. [This year’s program](#) featured four BOOST Finalists pitching their ideas to be awarded one of the two investment prizes.

This year’s winners were Rewilding Acres, an ecosystem restoration project that is transitioning commercial farmland into an organic, regenerative, and on-field educational site, and EcoShip, which collects gently used shipping materials to reduce the overall carbon footprint of at-home

deliveries.

Rewilding Acres, a project of nonprofit Eco.Logic, received the United Airlines BOOST 2022 Award, generously provided by United Airlines.

"United understands that to solve complex problems you need to be innovative and that's why we're proud to support early-stage entrepreneurs that are developing environmental solutions in the Midwest. We applaud the work Rewilding Acres is doing to rebuild ecosystems while facilitating educational opportunities for future environmentalists," said Kristin Lewis, Global Community Engagement, United Airlines. "Congratulations to all the entrepreneurs that participated and thank you to Delta Institute for introducing these creative businesses to Chicago."

"It's encouraging to see the growing awareness of how problematic our modern industrial food system is, and I'm so grateful for the support from BOOST that will help us start to shift towards more sustainable and nature-based solutions here in Illinois," shared Rozina Kanchwala, Founder and Executive Director of Eco.Logic. "Our project Rewilding Acres plans to transition what is a contributor to climate change into a climate solution."

EcoShip received the Audience Favorite Award, generously provided by the American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate and Social Impact.

"We aim to support social entrepreneurs working to provide economic opportunity and close equity gaps," shared Beth Churchill, Community and Social Impact Consultant, American Family Insurance Institute for Corporate and Social Impact. "We are interested in catalyzing a robust ecosystem of people working to solve important climate justice issues. By supporting organizations like the Delta Institute's annual BOOST event, we are supporting a part of that ecosystem."

"BOOST has cultivated a wonderful community focused on addressing complex environmental issues in a multitude of effective ways," said Aleksandra Plewa, CEO of EcoShip. "At EcoShip, we are honored to be a part of that community and we look forward to working with and supporting the Delta Institute, and past and future emerging leaders."

Joining the winners, the two other BOOST 2022 finalists were babygami, whose mission is to get diverse families outside by providing easily transportable and space-saving baby products, and Centreville Citizens for Change, a community group focused on stormwater and sewage solutions for a BIPOC majority town enduring legacy wastewater issues. Both finalists received \$1,000 honorariums to respect their acumen and efforts to create a more equitable and innovative Midwest region.

BOOST has a long legacy of investing in Midwestern innovations, with a proven track record of impact:

- Tessa Vierk, BOOST 2021 winner, has shared that her venture, Chicago Tool Library, has grown so fast—both in paid memberships and donated materials—that the company has outgrown their space.
- Christine Sorich of Tinyshop, a zero-waste grocery store focused on locally sourced goods that was the other BOOST 2021 winner, has grown her venture from a traveling zero-waste shop to one with a permanent storefront, gaining local headlines.
- Lillian Augusta, a BOOST 2019 winner devoted to creating plant-based braiding hair for Black women, has been featured in many continued pitch fests, including as a semi-finalist for the TechRise Chicago 100K Pitch Competition powered by P33.
- Southside Blooms, a brand operating under the umbrella company of BOOST 2017 Winner Chicago Eco-House, recently received national recognition on The Ellen DeGeneres Show and received a \$10,000 award for their work. Quilen Blackwell, the BOOST winner and company founder, was quoted saying, “The money will allow the organization to hire young people in need of a job or community service project and “get them off the streets and into the flower industry.”

BOOST is held each year in October; 2023 will help commemorate Delta Institute’s 25th Anniversary.

Delta Institute collaborates with communities to solve complex environmental challenges throughout the Midwest. We address Midwestern environmental, economic, and climate challenges today, so that our home and region are more resilient, equitable, and innovative tomorrow.

Delta exists because environmental, economic, and climate issues hit communities—urban and rural—through disinvestment, systemic inequity, and policy decisions. We collaborate at the community level to solve our home region’s new and legacy issues, by focusing on the self-defined goals and needs of our partners. [Delta Institute is a 501c3 nonprofit](#) with a Platinum Seal of Transparency from GuideStar.

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