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## eNews: January 2021

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We've completed a full month post-2020, so first, let's celebrate that milestone! It's all about the series of small wins in entrepreneurship.

To kick-off A2EF eNews this year, we are introducing a new format and ongoing feature sections that you can expect to see in each newsletter. The following is a brief overview of each section - scroll down to read the features and check-out the links!

**Founder 2 Founder:** When it comes to worthwhile startup advice, who can a founder trust more than someone walking in their shoes? Michigan startup leaders will share their thoughts, tips and tools to help fellow entrepreneurs save time and energy and hopefully leapfrog the challenges they overcame through trial and error.

**Noteworthy Nonprofit:** Embedded in the mission of A2EF is helping entrepreneurs connect with our community and its attributes outside of the tech scene. Each issue, we will showcase one of the many dedicated nonprofit organizations focused on making an impact in the daily lives of our neighbors, families and friends and share information for how you can get involved!

**Startup Skinny:** Links to news and highlights of recent happenings in our entrepreneurial ecosystem.

**Events:** Upcoming A2EF events and programs

**Resource Roundup:** Links to other activities, funding opportunities, podcasts etc. that may be helpful to entrepreneurs in their journey.

A blue rectangular banner with a white speech bubble icon on the left containing three horizontal lines. To the right of the icon, the text 'FOUNDER 2 FOUNDER' is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

## FOUNDER 2 FOUNDER

**Founder:** Danny Ellis, CEO

**Company:** [SkySpecs](#)

**Stage:** Series C venture-backed tech company

**Date Founded:** 2012

**Headcount:** 75

**Industry:** Energy



SKYSPECS

### Five minutes reading this article will save you hundreds of hours building your company

As a founder, your most precious resource is time. You can always find ways to raise more money, but you can never get back time spent. You may find you didn't get to market fast enough, you didn't capture a customer's attention when they had the highest pain point, or you may reach the end of your runway faster than you predicted. There are many ways you can optimize your time, especially in the initial stages of your company. If you put the best tools in place you will save yourself from manual, repetitive processes and from redoing significant amounts of work later. Take the time in the beginning to set up an infrastructure that will streamline your work so you can focus on solving big problems.

As the CEO of SkySpecs, an Ann Arbor company focused on powering the world with renewable energy by automating wind farms, I have spent almost ten years testing and implementing dozens of software platforms for every angle of the business. I have earned a reputation on our team of gravitating toward new software, always searching for ways to gain

efficiency. My goal in this article is to help you shorten your time to finding efficiencies by sharing my experience with the best platforms I have found. Hopefully, these tools can provide you and your organization the same time benefits they have for SkySpecs. [CLICK TO LEARN ABOUT MUST-HAVE STARTUP TOOLS](#)



- A2EF member, [Evoq, inks deal worth \\$240 million with Amgen](#)
- [Gov. Whitmer's COVID Recovery Plan](#) - \$225 million for new MEDC programs aimed at helping SMBs and high-tech startups
- [Top Ann Arbor Tech Companies to Watch 2021](#) including A2EF Startup Competition Winner, [Honesti](#)
- [Spellbound chosen as one of 13 startups](#) for the largest pediatric-focused digital health accelerator program in the world
- Fintech startup, [Pocketnest, closes \\$1.2 million funding round](#)
- [Groundspeed Analytics closes Series C investment to start 2021](#)
- [How Midwestern Startups succeed learning from BigTech mistakes](#) - featuring A2 & Detroit companies
- [Young Sharks starts kids on the entrepreneurial journey early](#)

## NOTEWORTHY NONPROFIT

Ann Arbor, featured by Bloomberg, TechCrunch and Forbes as one of the nation's rising tech hubs and "a potential startup powerhouse." A vibrant and diverse community that breeds innovation, where we expect autonomous vehicles to be trolling every street and smart city infrastructure in the next few years. Here are some other noteworthy stats about A2 and the county: 37% of people in our community struggle to afford basic needs. Almost 20% of children aged 0-5 are living in poverty and over 5,000 people are currently experiencing homelessness. This data was all prior to the pandemic.

### Ozone House

Fortunately, alongside our amazing tech community solving big problems for our future, we have amazing nonprofits addressing the challenges and needs that young people ages 10-20 face on a daily basis. One such organization is Ozone House. Based in Ypsilanti, Ozone House is a community-based agency that provides intervention and prevention services to homeless, high-risk youth and their families. From shelter, housing, individual or family counseling, 1:1 support and life skills, a job, help enrolling in school, or a hot meal, the organization addresses foundational needs and helps youth forge a path towards education and employment to realize their potential and lead lives of dignity.

"Ozone House focuses on providing the necessary skills young adults need to be successful in the world," said Sharonda Simmons, Director of Education and Outreach. "We meet young people where they are and offer resources to help them achieve their personal goals. This could range from them needing job readiness support through our WorkZone program access to community resources through Opening Doors, or help navigating the transit center through our partnership with the Ann Arbor transit authority. We always aim to provide tangible support so youth can live the lives and achieve the goals they aspire to reach."

Since 2015, AAACF has awarded over \$120,000 in competitive grants to Ozone House due to their high level of success in leadership, financial stability, and high quality and impactful programming. Their commitment to providing both prevention and intervention services makes them distinctly unique in this space and allows them to deliver comprehensive support.

The services and skills they provide can also serve as a bridge for equity in the workforce. Ozone House is one of the partners of the [A2EF DE&I Internship Program](#), providing a series of soft skills training opportunities for the underrepresented intern cohort that will be employed within 13 different local startups and venture capital firms. As part of their contributions, this month they conducted a virtual interview prep session for the more than 30 students who were invited to progress within the program.

### Want to get involved?

If you are interested in learning more about Ozone House or getting involved as a volunteer, [visit their website here](#) or email Sharonda Simmons at: [ssimmons@ozonehouse.org](mailto:ssimmons@ozonehouse.org)



Introducing our **A2EF Mini-Zoom Experiences** for founders! Come hang out with your peers while learning a new hobby or skill in **20 minutes**. This is also a great way to support local businesses right now!

Our first experience will be a hands-on coffee cupping session (from the comfort of your home) with expert roaster and co-founder of Ypsilanti-based Hyperion Coffee Company, Dan Kubera.

Participants will be sent a package with coffee samples and tasting equipment to their homes 1-2 days prior to the virtual event. You will then logon to Zoom to meet with fellow founders while Dan walks you through the art of coffee cupping and explains more about each of the different flavor profiles, roasting and brewing techniques.

Hyperion is a local favorite, known for their expertly brewed single-origin coffees. They prioritize relationships with their producers that result in equitable distribution of profits throughout the value chain and were featured in the 2017 book, "Where to Drink Coffee."

**Due to the unique nature of these experiences, attendance for each session will be limited, so register soon!**



- Looking for Funding? [InvestMidwest 2021 Applications Now Open](#) to Tech Startups - partnership with Michigan Growth Capital Symposium - apply by Feb 2nd
- [New HealthSpark Accelerator](#) in Traverse City now accepting applications for early-stage digital and telehealth startups to participate in their inaugural program - apply by Feb 22nd
- [Pivoting Past 2020](#) - Series of Audio conversations with entrepreneurs sharing their lessons learned and go-forward strategies for 2021 (hosted by Bamboo and Michigan House)
- [Michigan Women Forward Financing Opportunities](#) made possible by investment from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
- The next [A2NewTech Meetup](#) takes place Feb 16th
- [Ann Arbor SPARK Entrepreneurs Book Club](#) - free!
- [Ann Arbor Startups that are hiring](#)

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The Ann Arbor Entrepreneurs Fund (A2EF) is a vibrant hub for peer learning and networking that enables local entrepreneurs to turn business success into positive community impact. *Interested in becoming a member?* Please contact us at [community@a2ef.org](mailto:community@a2ef.org).