

The Inc.

MORE SPACE FOR EVEN BIGGER IDEAS

BY ANDREA MENDIZABAL

A newly-expanded space in Calgary's northwest is helping entrepreneurs go from inspiration to market. The Inc., located in the Alastair Ross Technology Centre, is a community helping entrepreneurs develop their brightest ideas into viable businesses by providing startups with space to work and grow through mentorship, support and programming.

"The Inc. provides us with an environment that encourages creative thinking, networking and collaboration with the advisers and other entrepreneurs working within this unique space," says Erica Hughes, president and founder of CareFind.

Hughes and a team of peers joined The Inc. as part of the 2017 Summer Incubator Program with the University of Calgary's Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

CareFind is a service that connects preoccupied parents with unpredictable schedules to real-time vacancy spots in nearby childcare facilities for full-, part-time and immediate requests.

By having all licensed and regulated facilities housed under the same network, highlighting availabilities, CareFind aims to alleviate the stress and time parents normally take when looking for emergency or permanent childcare.

"Access to The Inc. advisers allowed for weekly meetings and teachings that supported the growth of CareFind through their mentorship and guidance," says Hughes. "The program instructors advised us how to actively test the market through strategic customer interviews, and we discovered new challenges and pain points that our potential customers faced."

Powered by Innovate Calgary, The Inc. not only provides open desks and private office space to work, but also



supports and encourages the growth of ideas by including access to experienced advisers and programming to help move businesses forward.

"We have extended our membership with Innovate Calgary's The Inc. where we'll continue to receive mentorship and guidance to initiate CareFind's pilot project with parents and daycares," says Hughes.

CareFind is now working with the University of Calgary's iProgramming for Creative Minds where they will collaborate with a team of computer science students to build a beta version of CareFind's app.

With more space for more startups, The Inc. provides a critical mass of innovative thinkers and valuable connections within a larger community of mentors and other entrepreneurs.

Membership is on a pay-as-you-go model, complete with 24-7 access, meeting rooms, mail and reception services, wireless Internet, a business centre, one-on-one mentorship and a selection of Innovate Calgary programs such as Startup Primer, Discover and Validate.

To learn more about CareFind, visit carefind.ca or connect with them on Twitter @CareFindYYC. To learn more about The Inc. and how it can help move your startup forward, visit innovatecalgary.com/the-inc. **B**

ABOVE: ERICA HUGHES (RIGHT) AND KATHY BUI (LEFT), MEMBERS OF THE INC., ARE DEVELOPING CAREFIND, A SERVICE THAT CONNECTS PARENTS TO REAL-TIME CHILDCARE VACANCIES.

PHOTO SOURCE: CAREFIND