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6+ things to know in #MiamiTech: News from Snowpoint Ventures, Bling Capital, Research Park at FAU, Storybook App, Arkhaus, Moonshot Awards & more



1

Snowpoint Ventures, now based locally, has eye on defense-tech

[Snowpoint Ventures](#), under co-founders Doug Philippone and Alexander Creasey, have located their headquarters in Palm Beach County, the [South Florida Business Journal reported](#). Their mission is unique because of their knowledge and experience within the defense-tech space.

Creasey spent four years as a Naval cryptologist and most recently served senior director at Forge capital. Earlier in his career he was part of Palantir's Business Development and Strategy Team, Philippone spent 18 years in the Army and was deployed six times from 2003-2007, earning three bronze stars and other commendations for his service. He also was head of Global Defense at Palantir. The Snowpoint partners launched the firm in 2021.

Snowpoint invests in revenue-generating companies that serve both commercial and government clients in defense technology – everything from cybersecurity to clean power. "We believe dual-tech business models will be among the most successful of all robotics, artificial intelligence, and data companies," Snowpoint's website says.

Among its portfolio companies is Gecko Robotics, which built a robot that climbs walls and inspects infrastructure, manufacturing sites and military equipment. Red 6 of Orlando has developed an augmented reality platform that can be used for pilot training exercises. Candid Health developed a payments platform that eases medical billing easier for healthcare companies, and others include Elroy Air, FlightWave Aerospace, Labelbox, Merlin, Moxion Power, and Shield AI. [Read more here.](#)

2

Bling Capital backs edtech

[Bling Capital](#) of Miami led a \$5 million seed round in [TeachMe.To](#), a hub for finding and booking local in-person lessons. Participating in the round was Marketplace Capital, 20Growth, and Gokul Rajaram, as well as existing fund and angel investors, including 1984, Alumni Ventures; Ancestry CEO, Deb Liu; and Rover President, Brent Turner. TeachMe.To will use the investment to continue to enhance its platform with tools that improve the learning experience.

TeachMe.To, which offers lessons in Miami and throughout Florida, has expanded 10x between 2022 and 2023, now delivering more than 200 lessons per day and serving every major US city, the San Diego-based startup said. TeachMe.To currently offers lessons in a dozen categories including pickleball, golf, tennis, music and more.

“In the post-pandemic world, flexible schedules have become the norm, and coaches are increasingly choosing to teach their passions over traditional 9-to-5 jobs,” said Ben Ling, managing partner at Bling Capital. “We believe that in the next five years, AI will significantly accelerate this trend. As automation takes over more routine tasks, both students and teachers will have more time to dedicate to enjoyable, in-person experiences. TeachMe.To is strategically positioned to thrive in this evolving marketplace.”

3

Research Park at FAU nearly fully leased

The [Research Park at Florida Atlantic University](#) created 34 net new jobs and 17 internships for local college students during the first half of 2024. It houses a variety of technology startups and hosts programs like Global Ventures, an incubator program for second-stage tech firms, and [FAU Tech Runway](#), a public-private startup accelerator.

The Research Park at FAU is also almost fully leased, as numerous tenants opened new offices at the seven-building technology hub in Boca Raton while other tenants secured new partnerships and funding. “These recent success stories are just a few examples of how our tenants innovate, establish critical partnerships, obtain funding and grow,” said Andrew Duffell, president of the Research Park at FAU.

A few developments:

- FloSpine, a medtech startup, recently opened its 4,961-square-foot office at the Research Park and [closed \\$1.7 million in financing](#) for its flagship medical device Keylift.
- Instrumentum expanded its footprint at the Research Park by 4,564 square feet less than a year after taking occupancy. Instrumentum is an emerging leader in the surgical instrument sterilization field.

- The Boca Raton Airport Authority broke ground on a new Flight Observation Area to be constructed at the Research Park. The observation area will allow for public photography of aircraft in a safe setting.
- Triangulate Labs entered into a licensing agreement with the Mayo Clinic to develop its [AI-powered SkinMap technology](#).
- Aventusoft celebrated the opening of its 4,000-square-foot office at the Research Park, while Thema Brain Health officially opened its 2,652-square-foot location.
- Baptist Health opened its 9,100-square-foot, state-of-the-art cardiac care ambulatory surgery center.
- MPLT Healthcare is constructing a 7,810-square-foot office expansion that will bring its total footprint to 29,783 square feet upon completion.

4

Storybook to compete in Entrepreneurship World Cup finals

[Storybook App](#) won a spot as one of four US startups chosen to compete in the 2024 Entrepreneurship World Cup Global Finals in Saudi Arabia later this year for a share of the \$1 million dollar prize pool after a “standout performance” in the national contest. The awards program is organized by the Global Entrepreneurship Network. Storybook App was not the only Florida startup to be going to the Global Finals. Maya AI of Tampa also won the chance to compete.

“With so many talented founders and startups across the USA, being selected is truly meaningful, and we aim to bring the trophy home,” said Francisco Cornejo, in a LinkedIn post. “After our first corporate partnership in Abu Dhabi earlier this year and the upcoming addition of Arabic language and regional-inspired stories, heading to Saudi Arabia will help us expand our reach across the MENA region and bring Storybook App to more families.”

Storybook aims to improve children’s sleep, development and emotional health while bringing the family closer with a parent-led app with infant massage, affirmations, sleep meditations and bedtime stories for kids.

Since launching in 2019, the Entrepreneurship World Cup has attracted 430,000 registrations from 200 countries and connected founders with over \$4 million in cash prizes and another \$266 million worth of free support and services.

5

Miami near top of cities to start a business

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New data names Miami is the 2nd best U.S. city to start a business, with the highest success rates in the country, high employment in start-ups and entrepreneurs in every 8th home.

Nationally, a record-breaking 5.5 million new business applications were filed in 2023, but with 18% failing within their 1st year, budding entrepreneurs should increase their chances of success where possible, and a major factor to consider is location.

[USA TODAY Blueprint](#) analyzed 8 data points from 46 of the most populous U.S. cities, such as the number of businesses launched, closure rates, the % of households with self employed incomes, GDP growth, and more, to rank [the best cities to start a business](#). Miami ranked in second place, behind Austin, and ahead of Nashville, Dallas and Atlanta. A few Miami findings:

- Miami offers a high success rate for businesses: The city ranks no.1 overall for net business openings and net entry rates, with 7,364 more openings than closures.
- Miami also takes 1st place for the lowest rates of unemployment: 2.4%.
- Miami has the 4th highest employment in startups: With 4.6% (almost 1 in 20 jobs).
- There is an entrepreneur in every 8th Miami home: 13.3% of households have one member or more that is self employed.
- Miami has the 10th best GDP growth rate: GDP growth was 12.1% in 2021.

Miami and Miami-Dade County typically rank high on these kinds of lists that are based largely on business incorporations because of the region's immigrant culture. Jacksonville and Tampa also broke into the top 10 in this list, at number 7 and 10 respectively.

6

More #MiamiTech news to note

- **Moonshot awards open:** [Lab22c](#) announced that nominations are now open for the Moonshot Awards 2024, celebrating the founders, funders and institutions making a big impact in our region. Know someone who fits the bill? Nominate them today and help us celebrate the visionaries and trailblazers driving South Florida's economy forward. Nominate [here](#).
- **Arkhaus signs Blond:ish:** [Arkhaus](#), the maritime social club in development, announced the addition of Vivie-Ann Bakos, aka Blond:ish, to its Environmental Advisory Board. The acclaimed DJ and environmental advocate will bring her passion for eco-conscious initiatives to the board, strengthening ARKHAUS' commitment to environmental stewardship. Blond:ish is the co-founder of Bye Bye Plastic, an initiative aimed at eliminating single-use plastics from the music and

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hospitality industry. Arkhaus, aiming to open on the water later this year, is a social club that will be set on four solar-electric boats and dedicated to cultivating a community of innovators.

PLUS

Opportunity knocks

- **Endeavor Miami** is accepting applications for its fall EndeavorLAB Cohort for early-stage female founders. The two-month accelerator program is free to founders, thanks to the support of JPMorgan Chase, and concludes with a DemoDay event. Applications are open now through Aug. 10 [here](#).
- **The Miami Downtown Development Authority (DDA)** is offering \$1.1 million in incentives to attract businesses seeking to move to or expand their operations to Downtown Miami's Central Business District, Arts & Entertainment District or Brickell. The program offers grants up to \$25,000 per business for startups, and is flexible to allow businesses to either operate out of a co-working space or lease their own dedicated office space. Grants up to \$50,000 are available for mid-size businesses and ground floor retail operators moving into downtown. [Learn more here](#).
- As part of its **100 Startup Project Scholarship Program**, The Levan Center of Innovation is offering 10 entrepreneurs a one-year membership to the Levan Center of Innovation, thanks to the support of Memorial Healthcare System. [Apply here](#).