New Partnership Launches Accelerator Program For Early Stage Startups To Drive Innovation

Northwestern Mutual, Rockwell Automation, Kohl's, Baird And Milwaukee Institute Join To Support Milwaukee-Based Entrepreneurs

MILWAUKEE, Nov. 1, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- Northwestern Mutual, a leading financial security company, announced today a partnership to support early stage startup companies based in Milwaukee. Lead sponsor Northwestern Mutual and supporting sponsors, Rockwell Automation, Kohl's, Baird and Milwaukee Institute, will provide funding and other services to launch an accelerator program for early stage startup companies with local roots in the community.

The partnership between the organizations is centered on driving innovation and technology forward in Milwaukee. The new program was announced today at a Technology Summit hosted by Northwestern Mutual, which convened leaders in the local business, academic, government, civic and technology communities to discuss building and supporting a vibrant tech ecosystem in southeastern Wisconsin.

"Milwaukee's entrepreneurial spirit is fueling a vibrant startup community, which needs capital and support at the earliest stages of ideation," said John E. Schlifske, chairman and CEO, Northwestern Mutual. "We're proud to partner with Rockwell Automation, Kohl's, Baird and Milwaukee Institute on this program. By working together, we will make a greater impact to strengthen our tech community."

The seven-week accelerator program, gBETA Milwaukee, will run multiple times throughout the year and be led by gener8tor, a nationally ranked startup accelerator. gBETA Milwaukee will be held at the Lubar Entrepreneurship Center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which is run by Brian Thompson, director of the Lubar Entrepreneurship Center. It will provide early stage companies with access to a community of entrepreneurs, mentors, angel investors, venture capitalists, technologists and co-working space. All operating costs for the 2018 and 2019 programs will be provided by the members of the partnership, with no fee or equity requirements for the participants. To learn more about gBETA, visit www.gbetaaccelerator.com.

About Northwestern Mutual
Northwestern Mutual has been helping families and businesses achieve financial security for 160 years. Through a distinctive, whole-picture planning approach including both insurance and investments, we empower people to be financially confident so they can live life differently. We combine the expertise of our financial professionals with a personalized digital experience to help our clients navigate their financial lives every day. With $250.4 billion in assets, $28.2 billion in revenues, and more than $1.6 trillion worth of life insurance protection in force, Northwestern Mutual delivers financial security to more than 4.4 million people who rely on us for life, disability income and long-term care insurance, annuities, brokerage and advisory services, trust services, and discretionary portfolio management solutions. The company holds more than $100 billion of client assets as a part of its wealth management company and investment services. Northwestern Mutual ranks 97 on the 2017 FORTUNE 500 and is recognized by FORTUNE® as one of the "World's Most Admired" life insurance companies in 2017.

Northwestern Mutual is the marketing name for The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company (NM), Milwaukee, WI (life and disability insurance, annuities, and life insurance with long-term care benefits) and its subsidiaries. Northwestern Mutual and its subsidiaries offer a comprehensive approach to financial security solutions including: life insurance, long-term care insurance, disability income insurance, annuities, life insurance with long-term care benefits, investment products, and advisory products and services. Subsidiaries include **Northwestern Mutual Investment Services, LLC** (NMIS) (securities), broker-dealer, registered investment adviser, member FINRA and SIPC; the Northwestern Mutual Wealth Management Company® (NMWMC) (fiduciary and fee-based financial planning services), federal savings bank; and Northwestern Long Term Care Insurance Company (NLTC) (long-term care insurance).

About Rockwell Automation
Rockwell Automation Inc. (NYSE: ROK), the world's largest company dedicated to industrial automation and information, makes its customers more productive and the world more sustainable. Headquartered in Milwaukee, Wis., Rockwell Automation employs approximately 22,000 people serving customers in more than 80 countries.

Automation Fair, LISTEN. THINK. SOLVE. and PartnerNetwork are trademarks of Rockwell Automation Inc.

About Kohl's
Kohl's (NYSE: KSS) is a leading omnichannel retailer with more than 1,100 stores in 49 states. With a commitment to inspiring and empowering families to lead fulfilled lives, Kohl's offers amazing national and exclusive brands, incredible savings and an easy shopping experience in our stores, online at Kohls.com and on Kohl's mobile app. Throughout its history, Kohl's has given nearly $600 million to support communities nationwide. For a list of store locations or to shop online, visit Kohls.com. For more information about Kohl's impact in the community and how to join our winning team, visit Corporate.Kohls.com.

About Baird
Baird is an employee-owned, international wealth management, capital markets, private equity and asset management firm with offices in the United States, Europe and Asia. Established in 1919, Baird has more than 3,400 associates serving the needs of individual, corporate, institutional and municipal clients. Baird has $171 billion in client assets. Committed to being a great place to work, Baird ranked No. 4 on FORTUNE's 100 Best Companies to Work For in 2017 – its 14th consecutive year on the list. Baird is the marketing name of Baird Financial Group. Baird's principal operating subsidiaries are Robert W. Baird & Co. Incorporated in the United States and Robert W. Baird Group Ltd. in Europe. Baird also has an operating subsidiary in Asia supporting Baird's investment banking and private equity operations. For more information, please visit Baird's Web site at www.rwbaird.com.

About Milwaukee Institute
Milwaukee Institute is a not-for-profit that helps forward-thinking Midwesterners learn, connect and unlock the potential of advanced technologies and high-growth businesses to help our region thrive. It was founded in 2007 by John Byrnes, a private equity industry executive who is the Institute's chairman.

About gener8tor
gener8tor is a nationally ranked accelerator that invests in high-growth startups. Three times a year we invest up to $140K in each of five startups who receive a concierge experience during our 12-week accelerator program. gener8tor supports the growth of these startups through our network of experienced mentors, technologists, corporate partners, angel investors and venture capitalists.

gener8tor's 54 alums have cumulatively raised more than $120M in follow-on financing. Of these 54 alums, 57% have raised more than $1M in follow-on financing or have been acquired.

gener8tor invests in high-growth startups, including software, IT, web, SaaS, life science, medtech, e-commerce and hardware. Accepted startups receive up to $140K and 12 weeks of mentorship-driven programming. gener8tor is a proud member of the Global Accelerator Network (GAN) and is sponsored by American Family Insurance.

gener8tor is a GOLD-tier accelerator in the U.S. as ranked by the Seed Accelerator Rankings Project.

About gBETA
gBETA is a free, seven-week accelerator for early-stage companies with local roots. Each program is capped at five teams, and requires no fees and no equity.

The goal of gBETA is that at least 1/3 of program participants gain acceptance into a full-time, equity-based accelerator, or raise at least $50,000 in seed capital within one year of graduating from the program. Currently 50% of gBETA alumni have achieved this goal.

gBETA was founded in Madison in 2015, in partnership with American Family Insurance and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation, and has since expanded to four cities (Beloit, Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis).

SOURCE Northwestern Mutual

For further information: Meghan Greco, 1-800-323-7033, mediarelations@northwesternmutual.com

---

https://news.northwesternmutual.com/2017-11-01-New-Partnership-Launches-Accelerator-Program-For-Early-Stage-Startups-To-Drive-Innovation