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Kathy Shayna Shocket reports on the people who make a difference,



Social Venture Partners Arizona keeps scoring a home run for charitable causes in Arizona. On the heels of the organization's Fast Pitch annual event -comes the success of its new program, Next Gen Partners which recently awarded its Inaugural Grants.

The Fast Pitch was a record breaking night. About 720 business and community leaders gathered to watch seven nonprofits, an ASU student and a for-profit entrepreneur with a social mission, competing for cash awards and grants. And it's all live.

(Pictured above with finalist **Stephen Sparks** are SVP Fast Pitch Program Mentors **Michael Zirulnik**, of ASU, **Scott Salkin** of Allbound, **Patrick Armstrong**, SVP AZ Board Chairman and **Terri Calderón**, SVP AZ Executive Director. )

And it's all live! Finalists were asked, "How can you change the world in three minutes?" The event boasted a record attendance, sponsorship, number of awards given, and total dollar amount raised.

The nine finalists are tackling some of the most critical problems in the community. The top \$25,000 SVP Innovator Award was presented to Labor's Community Service Agency and **Stephen Sparks**, who was chosen by a panel of Partners from the SVP AZ network for the innovation and repeatability of the Shift Program. Stephen and LCSA also receive three years of SVP AZ Partner time and talent to support capacity building.

Through Social Ventures and its community partners' donations, \$61,000 in grants were awarded to non-profits that impact everyone.



(Pictured above are **Maggie Zehring**, deputy director of Arizona Education Foundation, **Phoebe Wells**, **Josh Smith** and **Evan Peck**.)

The Next Gen Partners new program provides middle and high schoolers with a hands-on curriculum in fundraising, volunteering and grant-making. The students first raised \$4K and have continued through the grant-making cycle. Most recently, they awarded two grants to organizations focused on education and technology. The finalist, AZ Strut, received \$2,000.

Congratulations to SVP Arizona - which cultivates effective philanthropists, strengthens nonprofits, and invests in collaborative solutions – building powerful relationships to tackle our desert community's social challenges.



**Kathy Shayna Shocket** is a freelance Writer and TV- Field Producer based in Phoenix, AZ. The former **TV-Reporter** has written for publications such as **TIME Magazine**, **Money Magazine**, **PEOPLE Magazine**, **The Hollywood Reporter** and **The NEW YORK TIMES**. You can reach her at [redkarpetgirl@aol.com](mailto:redkarpetgirl@aol.com)