

RealLIST Startups check-in: 14 promising Baltimore startups on 2021 goals and progress

In January, we named a collection of local startups to our annual list of most promising young companies. Here's how their year has gone.



How's your year going?

In a time of continued pandemic uncertainty, it remains a complicated question. Yet for many startups, the work of launching an early-stage company is continuing. [Accelerators are graduating cohorts](#). [VCs are investing](#). Deals are closing.

At a time when [rates of entrepreneurship have exploded](#), it helps to note how those companies that are a few years ahead have gotten to this point, and how they are faring now.

So, [as we did last year](#), we checked in on the companies we named to the [RealLIST Startups 2021](#), our list of the most promising tech companies in Baltimore. Startups we contacted shared differing levels of information, and we curated from our own reporting as well as others'. We didn't get chance to connect with all 20 from the list, either. (If you were on the RealLIST but not mentioned here, reach out to baltimore@technical.ly with an update and we'll add you!)

But, as we begin to start compiling 2022's list, we hope this can serve as a snapshot of where we are as 2021 winds down.

Here's the rundown:

Tradeswell

The startup that makes an algorithmic trading platform for ecommerce was coming off its [\\$15.5 million Series A](#) when RealLIST Startups 2021 came out in January. Fittingly, the company led by former **Millennial Media** CEO **Paul Palmieri** has been on a hiring streak since, and is now up to 40 team members, which it calls "quants."

The growth streak has continued for the company that earned our top spot. Over 350 brands are using the company's software, which brings data together from across ecommerce functions and uses AI to help leaders make decisions on how they are selling. With a focus on making engineering and data science-focused improvements to the SaaS platform, the company made enhancements to its AI-generated insights and user experience. It also added strategic partnerships, including a combined partnership with **Roundel**, **Criteo** and **Target.com** that allows brands to advertise on the latter, as well as other retail media channels.

The company's year in events has been very much of-the-moment for 2021. Team members attended in-person events like **Prosper Show** in Las Vegas in March to **retailX** in Chicago. At the same time, it brought together folks virtually around a specific area of interest as Tradeswell cohosted a private webinar on Amazon selling.

Delfi Diagnostics

A [\\$100 million Series A](#) to start the year helped propel this company developing a blood test for early detection of cancer toward the top of the list. The company founded by **Johns Hopkins** cancer scientist **Dr. Victor Velculescu** grew its leadership team by adding **Dr. Peter B. Bach** as chief medical officer, and pair of **VP** roles that reflect the company's dual focus on clinical work and machine learning algorithms.

The company's test also posted results. A study published in the journal **Nature Communications** found that the company's technology for detecting was able to detect 90% of lung cancer cases in a group of nearly 800 people. A second, 1,700-patient study was enrolling at the time the results were released in August, according to a [news release](#).

Live Chair Health

Public health outreach has never been more important or visible in a pandemic. So it's fitting that Live Chair Health, which works with barbershops to address health equity, got involved in COVID-19 outreach. [According to Maryland Matters](#), it partnered with **Kaiser Permanente** and the **University of Maryland School of Public Health** to train barbershop and salon owners about COVID-19, the vaccine and navigating the healthcare system. Part of the state's efforts, it worked in Prince George's and Montgomery counties, as well as Baltimore City. The orgs wanted to reach Black and Latinx residents with good information in spots where they are already gathered, and hair care spots proved to be a good venue.

MissionGo

As a follow-up to a drone flight over Baltimore that transported a kidney for transplant in 2019, the unmanned aircraft tech company held another flight milestone this summer. At a Southern Maryland site in August, the company's **MissionGO MG Velos 100** completed four separate flights that simulated shipment of four different blood samples between **The Living Legacy Foundation of Maryland** and immunization labs. The flight provided data that the shipment was about 292% faster than shipping via ground.

MissionGo is working alongside sister companies **AlarisPro** (software) and **MediGo** (logistics) to build the delivery system for organs and blood for transplant. The company is working on **Federal Aviation Administration** certification for the aircraft, which took a step with [one key approval](#) in April.

Rose Health

Rose Health's team has been focused on mental health, both for the wider world and its own team. According to a **Washington Business Journal** story [published](#) in September, the Johns Hopkins-affiliated company created a concierge team and is planning a tool that uses machine learning to help doctors stay in touch with patients between visits.

In early September, the company took a week to "power down" to give the team time to rest and spend with family ahead of a busy fall.

"At Rose, our goal is to create an amazing product that ultimately will improve the well-being of people everywhere. My goal is to do the same for our employees," CEO **Kavi Misri** wrote in a letter to team members, per WBJ. It's a reminder that leading a startup often means making sure the company's operations are in line with mission as much as its product.

MindStand Technologies

Using AI to identify hate speech, harassment and misconduct, the startup founded by **UMBC** students is looking to foster healthy online communities. At a time when such communities have become primary places to connect, it makes sense that the idea is winning favor.

CEO **Michael Ogunsanya** put [well-honed pitch skills](#) to work and was recognized at a competition hosted by **The Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation** at **Duke University's Fuqua School of Business**. Closer to home, the company was the [winner of \\$10,000](#) at the **Minority Innovation Weekend** pitch competition this summer.

The company also continues to be active in the local tech community. Ogunsanya [joined the steering committee](#) of diversity, equity and inclusion-focused coalition **Baltimore Tracks**, offering expertise and content as it works to grow an equitable tech workforce.

Infinite Focus Schools

Buoyed by early-stage resources like **Loyola University Maryland's Baltipreneurs** accelerator and **Innovation Works' Ignite Capital**, the startup focusing on socio-emotional learning got a new round of support this year. To name a few we've covered: The company received a \$100,000 investment from

TEDCO's Builder Fund, and hired to grow the team. Plus, Founder **Ashley Williams** connected with **T. Rowe Price** and **Business Volunteers Maryland** at a **skillConnect** event.

Trustate

The tech-enabled estate administration service has received support through national startup resources. It completed an accelerator with Chicago's **1871 and BMO Harris Bank**, which enabled it to further develop its software. It was also selected to join the **Equifax Product Studio**, allowing it work side-by-side with the tech teams from Equifax during in-person sessions over four months. The company was also one of 50 to present at **TechCrunch Disrupt Startup Alley**. It has brought on 14 enterprise partners in 2021, and is seeing 989% growth.

While it will continue to serve clients in the DMV region, the company's team members were among the many folks that relocated during the pandemic. It is now headquartered in Florida.

Parity Homes

The big highlight for the year so far for Parity Homes and founder **Bree Jones** came Saturday. That's when the equitable development company **broke ground** on the first three vacant houses it plans to renovate and sell as affordable homes. The company's goal is development without displacement, and the gathering of collective members who are prospective buyers as well as existing community members, as well as elected officials, funders and social entrepreneurship community builders showed there is a community behind the mission. Showing the work is resonating beyond Baltimore, Jones is entering a three-year \$225,000 fellowship from the **Fund for New Leadership**.

Here's a few updates from the companies we tabbed for honorable mention:

- **The Black Brain Trust** — The startup developing a score to measure diversity and equity in for-profit companies received a \$150,000 investment from **Fearless** and the **Harbor Bank of Maryland**.
- **Dentuit** — **In a Technical.ly Slack AMA**, Founder **Dan Lee** told us about how his team optimized for remote work and is building a dental AI to help better analyze dental X-rays.
- **Flave** — The startup **launched its restaurant discovery app** and received \$100,000 through **TEDCO's RUBRIC** program. It's looking to continue supporting local small businesses at a time when they've struggled in the pandemic.
- **Relavo** — The Johns Hopkins-born startup creating a device to make home kidney dialysis safer saw CEO **Sarah Lee** profiled on **Maryland Inno Under 25**.
- **SpreadKarma** — The crowdfunding platform for social changemakers completed the Johns Hopkins **Social Innovation Lab** in the spring, and was featured in **Ignite Capital's** investor showcase.