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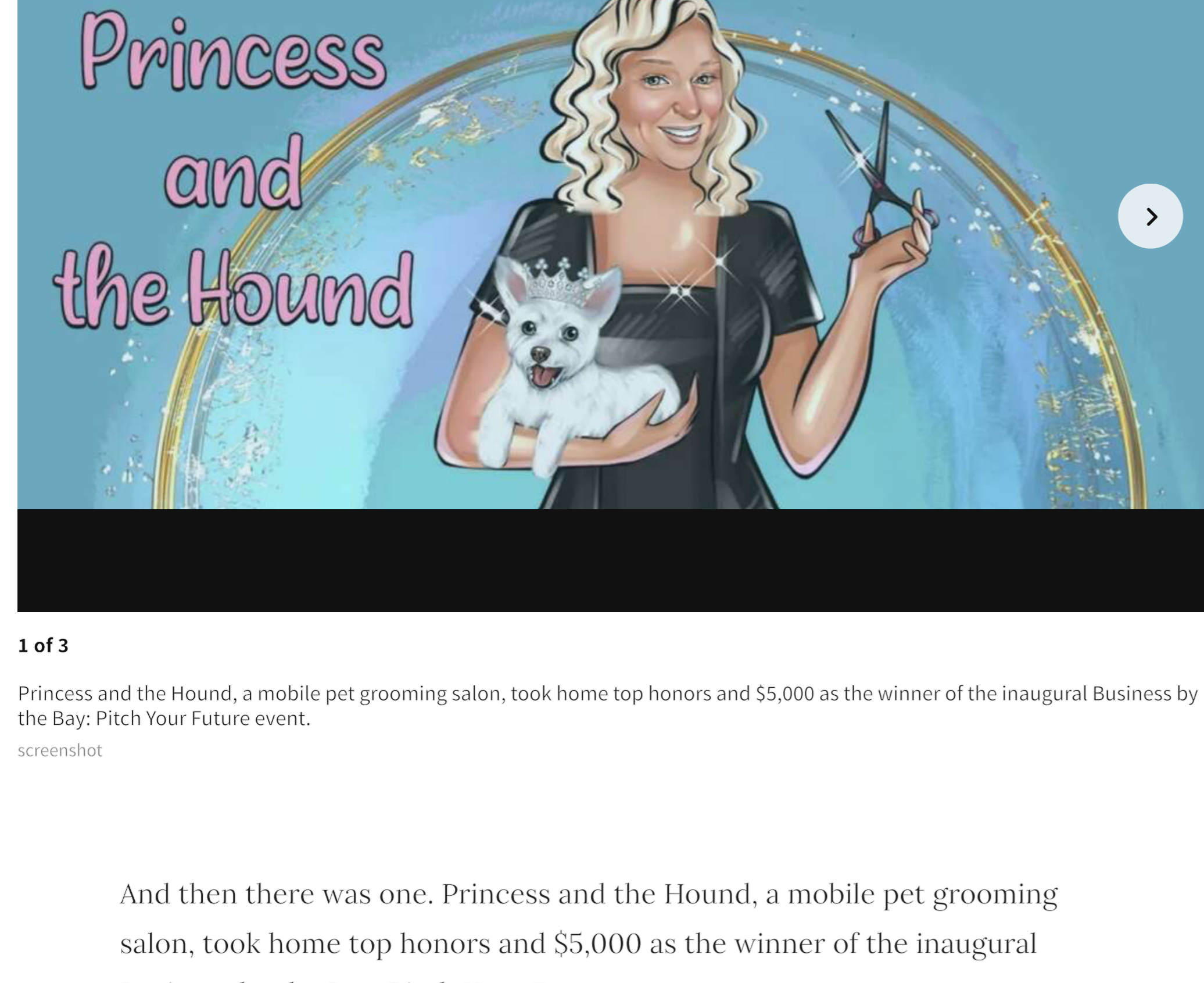
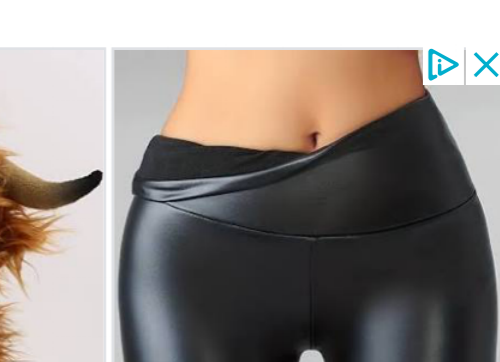


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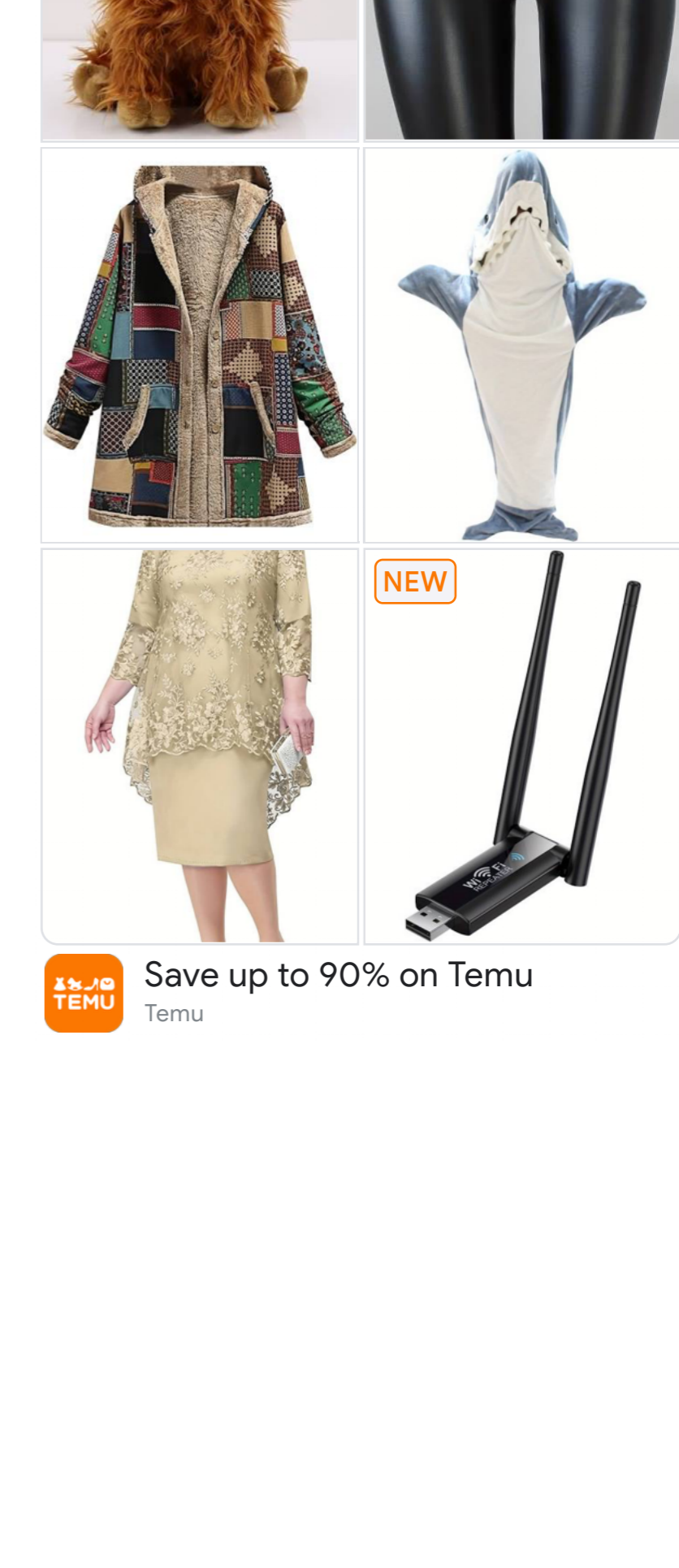
NEWS

Princess and the Hound wins \$5,000 first prize in 'Pitch Your Future'

Jon Becker, for the Daily News
Dec. 1, 2023

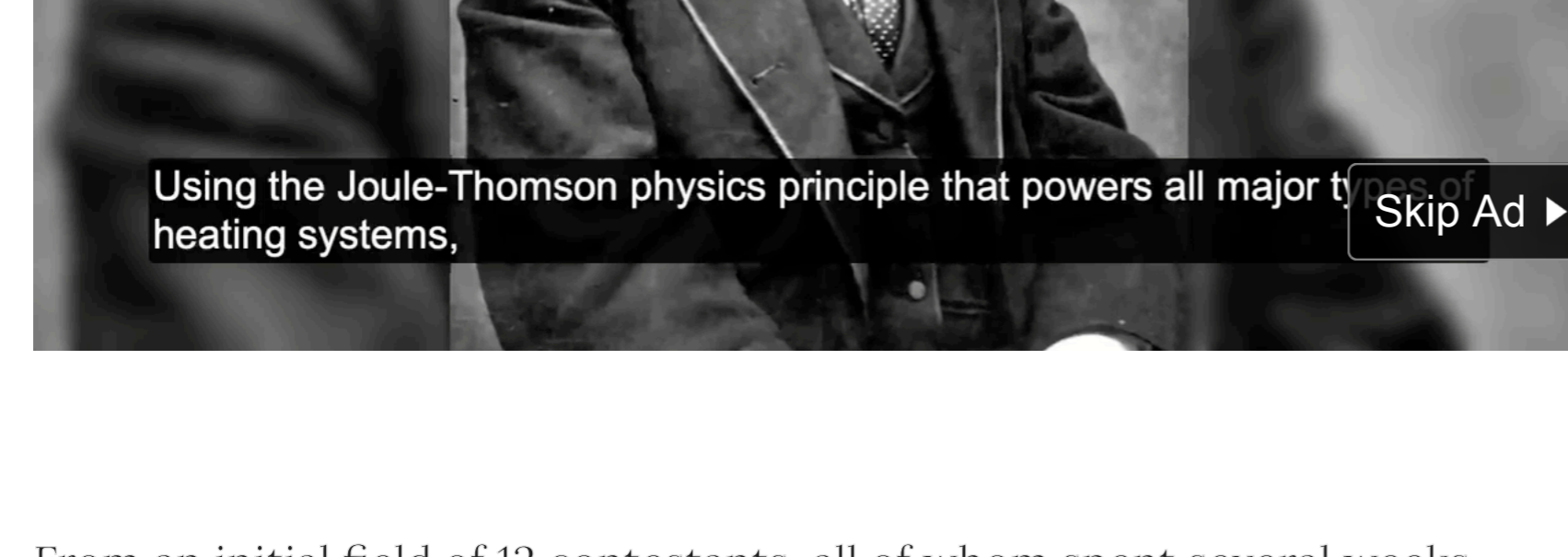


1 of 3 Princess and the Hound, a mobile pet grooming salon, took home top honors and \$5,000 as the winner of the inaugural Business by the Bay: Pitch Your Future event.



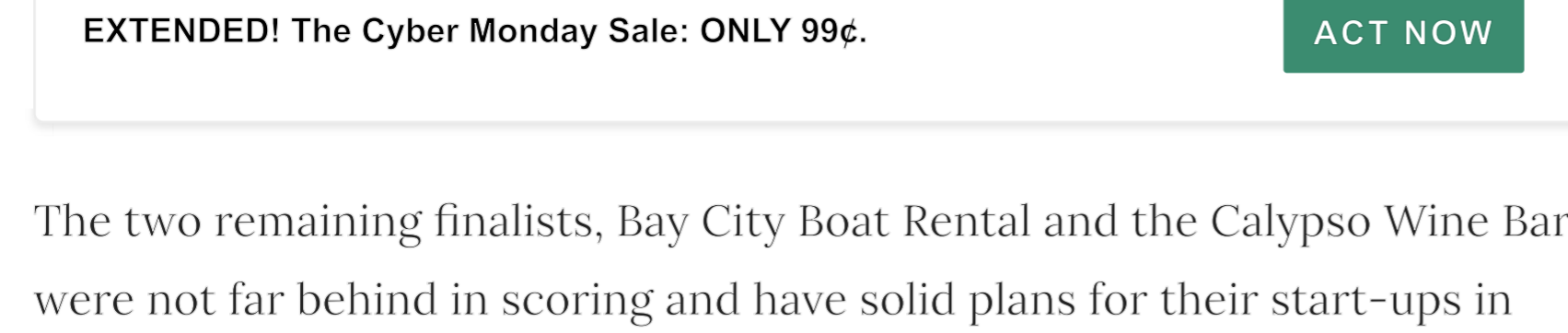
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And then there was one. Princess and the Hound, a mobile pet grooming business, took home top honors and \$5,000 as the winner of the inaugural Business by the Bay: Pitch Your Future event.



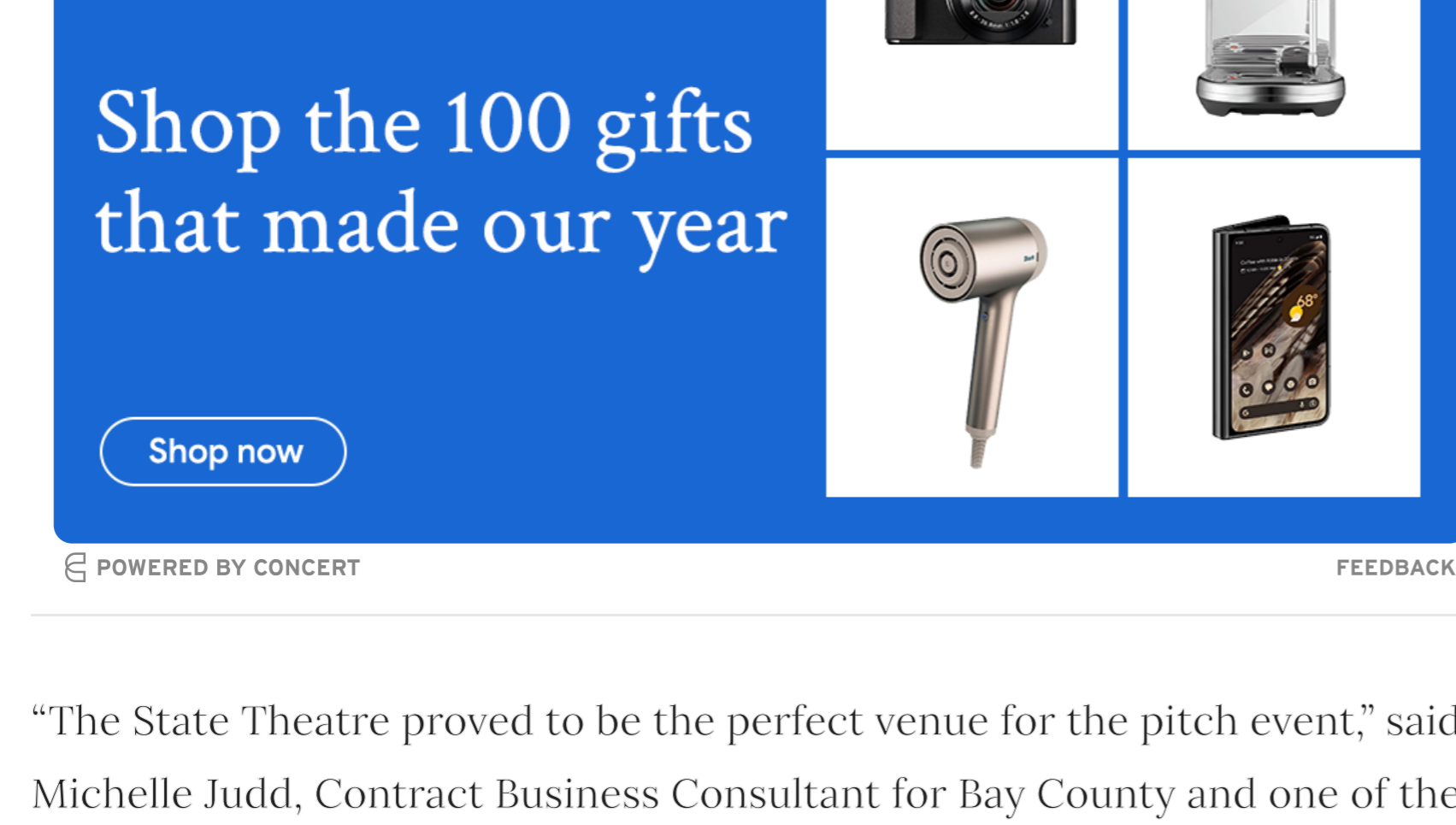
From an initial field of 12 contestants, all of whom spent several weeks preparing their pitches, Princess and the Hound emerged victorious during the contest's final round, a "Live Pitch" event that took place on Nov. 8 at the State Theatre in Bay City.

More than 75 attendees came out to support the presenters. Each of the five finalists took center stage to present their business plan to a panel of judges. LoLoBee's Lounge, a Bay City coffee shop, was awarded second place and \$3,500, and Bayside Buggies, a pedicab transportation service, won \$1,500 for its third-place finish.



The two remaining finalists, Bay City Boat Rental and the Calypso Wine Bar, were not far behind in scoring and have solid plans for their start-ups in 2024, officials said.

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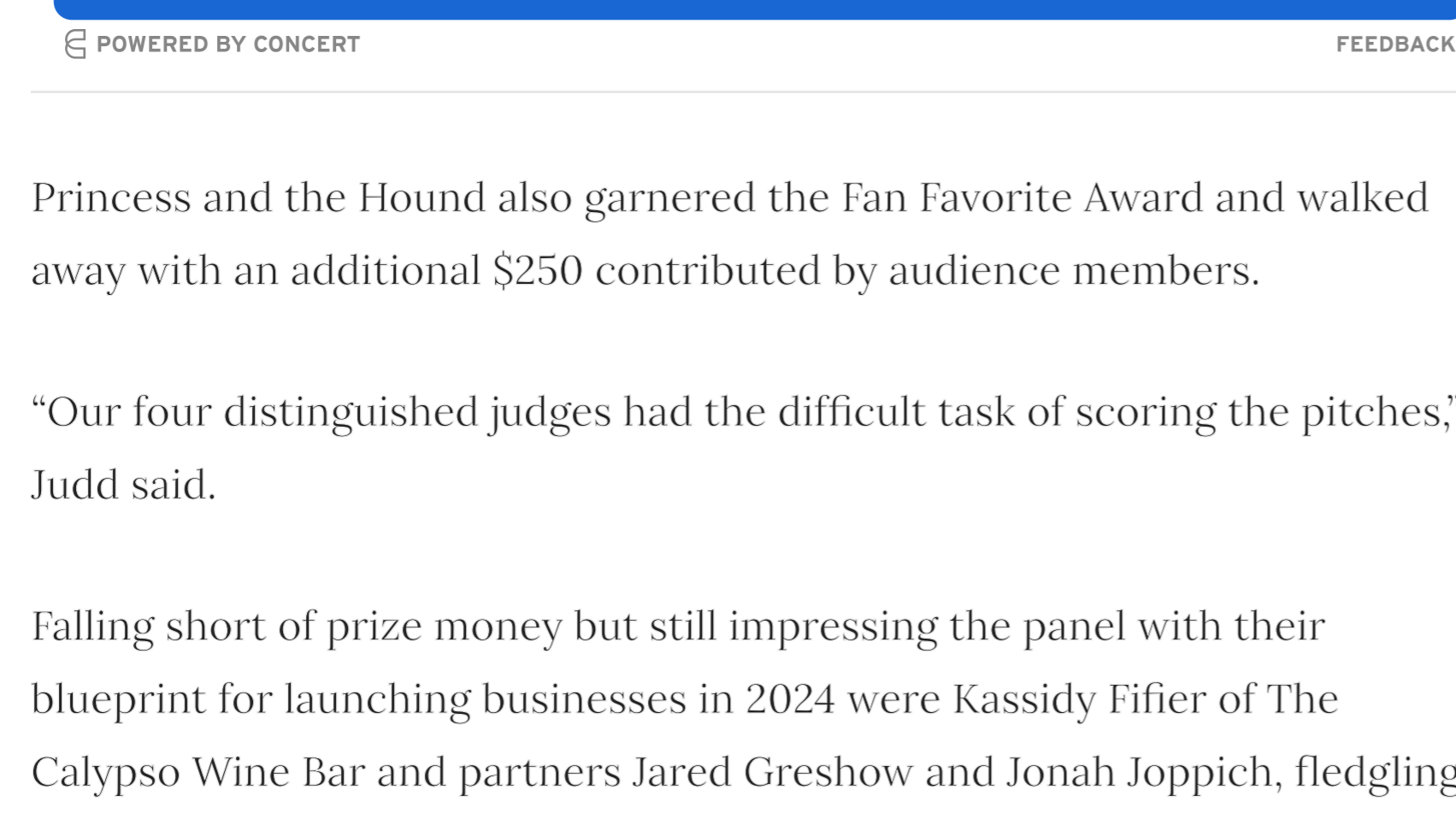
"The State Theatre proved to be the perfect venue for the pitch event," said Michelle Judd, Contract Business Consultant for Bay County and one of the event's lead organizers. "Most, if not all, of our contestants had never presented on a stage or entered a competition to vie for funding. The pressure to be clear about their funding request, provide well-researched data about their strategy, and answer questions from judges on the fly encouraged them to do their homework."

Princess and the Hound is located in Bangor Township and owned by Jena Monville. She plans to use her cash winnings for equipment purchases and to outfit her mobile dog grooming trailer with a custom wrap that advertises her business.

LoLo Bee owners Ben Paul and Lauren Williams plan to improve their brick-and-mortar visibility with exterior signage. Bayside Buggies owner Cory Christopher will use his third-place winnings of \$1,500 to outfit his pedicabs with electric motors.

"This will increase range and allow drivers to operate more efficiently than manual pedaling with passengers aboard," Judd explained.

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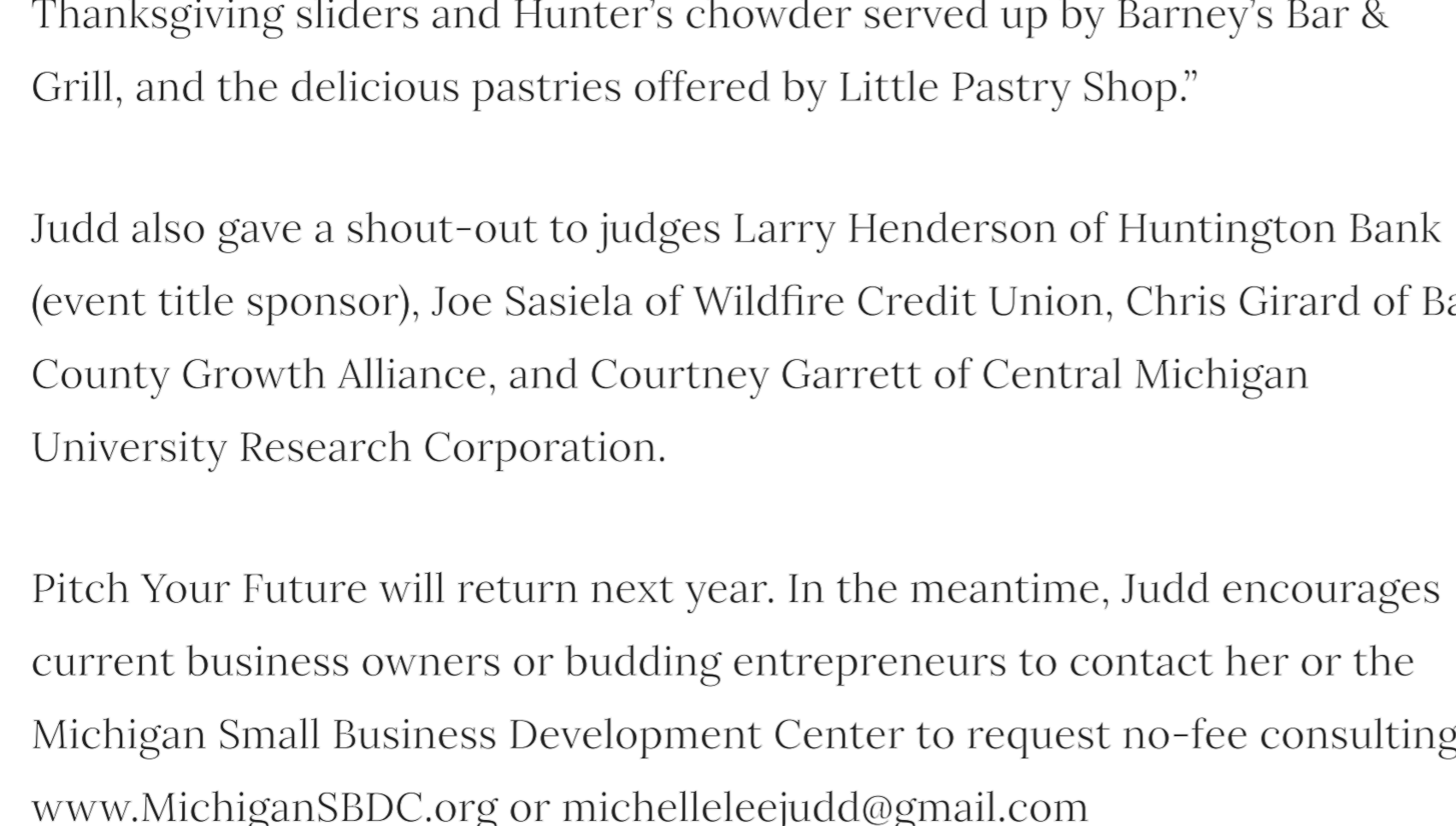
Princess and the Hound also garnered the Fan Favorite Award and walked away with an additional \$250 contributed by audience members.

"Our four distinguished judges had the difficult task of scoring the pitches," Judd said.

Falling short of prize money but still impressing the panel with their blueprint for launching businesses in 2024 were Kassidy Jipper of The Calypso Wine Bar and partners Jared Greshow and Jonah Joppich, fledgling entrepreneurs with Bay City Boat Rentals, a drive-yourself pontoon boat rental business.

The competition, the brainchild of Bay Future, Inc. and the Michigan Small Business Development Center, was open to small Bay County start-up or for-profit businesses that have been operating for two years or less and have generated less than \$1 million in revenue.

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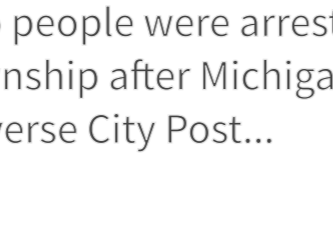
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"Even those who have already opened their businesses mentioned that they learned a lot by participating and are inspired to evolve," Judd noted. "Guests were also wowed by the charcuterie presented by Artigiano, Thanksgiving sliders and Hunter's chowder served up by Barney's Bar & Grill, and the delicious pastries offered by Little Pastry Shop."

Judd also gave a shout-out to judges Larry Henderson of Huntington Bank (event title sponsor), Joe Sasiela of Wildfire Credit Union, Chris Girard of Bay County Growth Alliance, and Courtney Garrett of Central Michigan University Research Corporation.

Pitch Your Future will return next year. In the meantime, Judd encourages current business owners or budding entrepreneurs to contact her or the Michigan Small Business Development Center to request no-fee consulting: www.MichiganSBDC.org or michelleleejudd@gmail.com

Written By Jon Becker



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