

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2021

CONTACTS:

Judy Moore - jmoore@nrgrda.org
(304) 669-4870

Mike Fulton – mikef@asheragency.com
(301) 651-2508

**Family Business Analabs Weathers Highs and Lows of Coal Industry,
Pivots to Medical Cannabis, Hemp and Other Analytical Testing to Grow**

Beckley, W.Va. (March 31) – Persistence pays.

No one knows that better than Kelli Harrison, vice president of Analabs, Inc., an analytic laboratory testing company in Crab Orchard.

Analabs, named Small Business of 2020 by the West Virginia Hive Network, just landed a statewide medical cannabis testing permit and Harrison is starting to realize the vision she and her father, Charles Thompson, saw in the 1990s when the analytical testing needs of the coal industry waned.

“Dad and I knew we had to diversify our lab facilities to address new and emerging testing needs in drug and alcohol, air quality, hemp and cannabis, food quality, and others,” said Harrison. “The coal testing market sustained Analabs for many years, even as we navigated through the many economic downturns that have plagued the coal industry.”

Harrison said Analabs, which employs 29 workers, still struggles to create revenue streams to offset their losses in the coal industry. “We turned to the business professionals at the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority (NRGRDA) and the West Virginia Hive for advice and counsel, and that was one of the best decisions I’ve ever made.”

To pivot, Analabs needed additional equipment, software, overhead and human capital. Judy Moore, director of the West Virginia Hive based in Beckley, said “Kelli and the management team knew diversification needed to happen to keep the lab operating and continue employment of its 20-plus employees. Due to their financial situation, moving forward was going to be difficult.”

Harrison explored many financing options for Analabs, including outside investors, but the risks outweighed the reward. “Through perseverance, some willing vendors, and support from the NRGRDA and West Virginia Hive,” Harrison said she was able to secure the equipment, software, and training she and her team needed to begin new types of analytical testing.”

On March 19, the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health, Offices of Medical Cannabis and Laboratory Services awarded a laboratory permit for medical cannabis testing to Analabs. The lab is expected to perform a broad range of statewide testing to ensure products are safe for patient medical use.

“Our pivot is complete,” said Harrison, “and now our growing company can look ahead at the popular hemp market, government contracting, environmental, water, food, natural gas, and other testing opportunities. The future is bright.”

Jina Belcher, executive director of the New River Gorge Regional Development Authority, said Raleigh County was the first in the state to enact a proclamation welcoming the medical cannabis industry and has seen great success as a result. “Raleigh County secured 20 percent of the state’s cultivation permits, 20 percent of the processing permits, and five dispensary permits,” said Belcher. “Analabs’ success in securing the only state contracted lab permit is the crowning accomplishment for industry success and is a true embodiment of economic diversification.”

Moore said the West Virginia Hive has worked with Analabs on several opportunities but the one to help move their laboratory and employees to the next stage to offer cannabis and hemp lab services was the most rewarding. “We provided Analabs with support through advising and technical assistance funding to update its software and maintenance contract to accommodate and support new analytical testing services. This support paired with Kelli’s creative and diligent thinking has positioned the family business to thrive.”

Harrison agreed, saying, “Analabs is very thankful to have received the technology grant from the West Virginia Hive and loan assistance from the NRGRDA. As a small business that has been drastically affected by the downturn in the coal industry, we were doing all we could to pivot into other industries. The difficulty in trying to add new services is the cost involved, which nearly makes it impossible when experiencing a financial crisis.”

For more information on Analabs and its services: www.analabsinc.com

The West Virginia Hive has served 331 businesses and helped launch 44 businesses in its service area. It is currently assisting 74 clients with business advising and technical assistance support on business modeling, financing, human resources, marketing, and other services. The Hive is the entrepreneurship program of the NRGRDA and the administrator of the Country Roads Angel Network. More information about the West Virginia Hive can be found at <https://wvhive.com/>.

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Photo Attached

Caption: Annissa Reiger, lab director; Charles Thompson, president; and Kelli Harrison, vice president (left to right) at Analabs, a small business in southern West Virginia's coal country that is pivoting to analytical testing of cannabis and hemp.