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Serial tech entrepreneur Kelly Fitzsimmons to keynote Nov. 7 at Early Stage Symposium

MADISON, Wis. – Kelly Fitzsimmons, a Milwaukee-based entrepreneur whose journey has ranged from cybersecurity to voice technology, and from virtual reality to film, will set the tone for the annual **Wisconsin Early Stage Symposium** with a Nov. 7 opening session talk in Madison.

As someone who has built companies and recovered from a major loss along the way, Fitzsimmons will talk about learning from failure – and how to avoid it if possible. Her upcoming book, “**Lost in Startuplandia**,” was motivated by her frustration with current literature for startups.

“Success is not simple. Success is incredibly complex and it has everything to do with the individual,” Fitzsimmons told BizTimes Milwaukee in a recent interview.

Fitzsimmons is the recipient of the Silvertip PwC Entrepreneurship Award and Speech Technology’s Luminary Award. Her work has been published by Network Computing, InformationWeek and Inc. An active angel investor, she serves on the technology committee for BELLE Capital USA, an early stage angel capital fund that invests in women-led startups.

She is co-founder of Custom Reality Services, a virtual reality production company whose first project, “Across the Line,” premiered at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival.

Early bird registration for the conference, which begins with a Nov. 6 reception highlighting women entrepreneurs and continues Nov. 7 and 8 at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center, is available at wiseearlystage.com.

Applications are being accepted now from young companies that want to tell their stories to investors. Instructions for how to apply for all or a mix of the investor presentation opportunities can be found at wiseearlystage.com on the Presenting Companies tab. The deadline to apply is **5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 28**.

The 2018 format includes two pitch opportunities – the **Tech Council Investor Networks** track and the popular **Elevator Pitch Olympics** – as well as a repeat segment that debuted in 2016, “**Investor Intros**,” which will allow pre-selected companies brief, one-on-one meetings with targeted angel and venture investors. Companies may apply online for one, two or all three.

All applicants must register in advance for the conference at a discounted rate of \$179. Companies selected for the Tech Council Investor Networks track presentations will also receive a complimentary individual membership to the Tech Council’s Innovation Network for one year (a \$120 value). Team members of these companies will be eligible to attend the conference at a special team rate.

Already announced: The morning of Nov. 8 will open with Aaron Kennedy, founder of Noodles & Co., a UW-Madison graduate and an entrepreneur whose experiences include projects around the world as well as close to home. The conference will also feature:

- Panel discussions and workshops featuring leading entrepreneurs, investors and others.
- “Office Hours,” offering the opportunity to meet with subject experts on a variety of topics in small discussion groups or one-on-one.
- The 5th annual “Excellence in Entrepreneurial Education” award presentation and luncheon.
- Exhibit hall showcasing more than 40 Wisconsin companies.
- A Nov. 6 Wisconsin WOMEN reception (Women, Opportunities, Mentors, Networking, Entrepreneurs). This event is open to both men and women.
- A Nov. 7 conference reception, two luncheons, two breakfasts and other networking opportunities, including an investors-only dinner.

The Tech Council produces the conference. Sponsors so far include: [100state](#), [Aberdean Consulting](#), [Accuray](#), [ACS](#), [American Transmission Co.](#), [AT&T](#), [Aurora Health Care](#), [Baird Capital](#), [Baker Tilly](#), [Barb Luhning Graphic Recording](#), [BDO](#), [BloodCenter of Wisconsin](#), [BMO Harris](#), [Boardman & Clark](#), [Capital Newspapers](#), [Carroll University](#), [CGI](#), [City of Fitchburg](#), [Concordia University](#), [Cresa Madison](#), [Dane County Regional Airport](#), [Dedicated Computing](#), [DXC Technology](#), [Enbridge](#), [Eppstein Uhen Architects](#), [Exact Sciences](#), [Findorff](#), [First Business Bank](#), [Fluno Center](#), [Foley & Lardner](#), [Functional Biosciences](#), [Godfrey & Kahn](#), [HealthX Ventures](#), [Husch Blackwell](#), [JP Cullen](#), [M3 Insurance](#), [Madison College](#), [Madison Gas & Electric](#), [Marquette University](#), [Marshfield Clinic Health System](#), [Makin' HEY! Communications](#), [Merchant & Gould](#), [Michael Best](#), [Midwest Prototyping](#), [Morgridge Institute](#), [Murphy Desmond](#), [N29 Capital Partners](#), [Neider & Boucher](#), [Northwestern Mutual](#), [Red Arrow Production](#), [Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren](#), [River Valley Bank](#), [Square 1 Bank](#), [Sun Mountain Kegonsa](#), [Tech Council board member Susan Healy](#), [State of Wisconsin Investment Board](#), [TASC](#), [Technology Innovation Center – MKE](#), [University Research Park](#), [UW-Green Bay](#), [UWM Research Foundation](#), [Venture Investors](#), [Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation](#), [Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.](#), [Wisconsin Health & Educational Facility Authority](#), [Whitewater University Technology Park](#), [WIPFLI](#), [Yahara Software](#) and [Ziegler](#).

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