



# Meet the future leaders of Kentucky tech

Inno Under 25 recognizes the next generation of innovators in the Bluegrass State

BY HALEY CAWTHON | [hcawthon@bizjournals.com](mailto:hcawthon@bizjournals.com) | 502-498-1954 | @BFLouHaley

**W**hat were you doing when you were 21? I certainly wasn't starting my own business, developing new technologies or disrupting entire product categories. But the entrepreneurs we've selected for this year's Inno Under 25 recognition aren't the standard twenty-somethings.

Inno Under 25 puts a spotlight on the top young entrepreneurs, founders and innovators from across the commonwealth.

This year, we're featuring five founders, some of whom were nominated by area business leaders. We also picked a couple of our own, who we know are meant for great things.

For example, Megan Burris, a senior at Northern Kentucky University, recently won the \$15,000 first place prize in the KY Pitch competition. Her business offers

100% waterproof collars and leashes made from BioThane, a vegan leather, made from polyester webbing that is then coated in PVC or TPU making it durable, waterproof, fade proof, stink proof and antimicrobial.

Or take William Brown, co-owner and founder of Brown Water Bourbon Xchange, who has garnered more than \$650,000 in investments for his Bardstown, Kentucky-based bourbon business.

Those are just two instances of success and the incredible ingenuity each of these founders possess.

Kentucky's biggest asset is its people. And the more young innovators that stay and grow here, the better off our ecosystem will be.

Get to know the founders in the Q&As on the following pages, and read more at [kentuckyinno.com](http://kentuckyinno.com).



## RIYA SHAH

Founder and president, Fetal Life LLC

**H**ow did you get into the career you have today? Growing up, I have always enjoyed problem-solving and thinking out-of-the-box. When I was 15 years old, I learned about the emotional and financial burdens my mother faced when she was pregnant with me — her first child. Her story inspired me to invent a patented contraction monitoring device and start my company, Fetal Life LLC.

**Age:** 20

**Hometown:** Prospect, Kentucky

**Resides:** Prospect

**The company:** A mobile app that allows mothers to monitor their pregnancies.

**Education history:** Currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering at Georgia Institute of Technology (May '24), with minor in engineering and business, at Georgia Tech's Denning Technology & Management Program; Stamps President's Scholar (full scholarship to Georgia Tech)

**Hobbies:** Traveling, painting, reading poetry, watching sports.

**Twitter:** @riya\_shah10/

**Instagram:** @riya.shah01/

**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/in/riyashah710](https://www.linkedin.com/in/riyashah710)

**Favorite tech gadget:** Apple Watch

Currently, I serve as the founder and president of Fetal Life. There is nothing more difficult yet so fulfilling than turning dreams into realities, and entrepreneurship allows just that. Being an entrepreneur is a rewarding experience that not only shapes one's identity but eventually becomes ingrained in it, and I am fortunate to be an entrepreneur.

**What's one thing Kentucky can do to improve its tech and/or startup ecosystem?** I strongly believe that age is truly just a number. Nobody is ever too young to begin their journey as an entrepreneur, and oftentimes, students are unaware about what innovation and entrepreneurship are or how to get started. To further enhance Kentucky's startup ecosystem, I believe schools should teach students about innovation and entrepreneurship.

Exposure on how to develop a new product and how to create a startup at a young age can be very valuable and can inspire students to think of new ideas and pursue them. Over time, innovation may be ingrained in the youth of Kentucky — the future of the state — bolstering Kentucky's startup ecosystem through a series of entrepreneurial ventures.

**Who has been one of your top mentors?** My mother, Swati Shah, has always been an empowering mentor to me. She is a serial entrepreneur, and her courage to overcome financial and personal obstacles to turn her

entrepreneurial dreams into reality has always served as an inspiration to me as I run my company. She serves as a reminder to me that challenges are simply part of the journey, and that perseverance is the key to achieving your goals.

**What's something about you that people might not know?** I love to travel and experience once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. Recently, I embarked on a week-long backpacking trek through the deserts of southwest Utah.

**What's one thing you want to accomplish before turning 30?** I'm passionate about improving pregnancy outcomes and reducing access to care issues, and I hope to accomplish this globally through Fetal Life's products.

**What innovative company (other than your own) do you admire and why?** I admire Olive AI, which is a company specializing in designing software for health care systems to improve patient care and assist health care workers. Artificial intelligence is the future, and Olive AI is an enabler for health care providers to serve patients efficiently.

I admire their passion for improving patient care — a vision that resonates closely with my company, Fetal Life's, vision. Through our innovative technologies, the Fetal Life team and I also want to be enablers for health care providers to help them make informed decisions for the betterment of maternal and fetal health during pregnancy.