

'They Deserve Care'

NONPROFITS: The Musa Project Completes \$200K Expansion, Launches \$750K Campaign

By MADISON GEERING

ENCINITAS — “When I had my son, I had great medical care,” **The Musa Project** CEO and co-founder **Anastasia Marks** said. “He had a couple issues, but I was taken care of — we were taken care of.”

This is not the case, Marks reflected, for many women in other countries.

In Uganda alone, 200,000 women suffer from obstetric fistula, a severe childbirth injury that affects mainly teenage mothers.

“Just because they’re in Africa and live far away from services, doesn’t mean that they should suffer for years and years and years,” she continued. “They deserve care. They deserve to have a dignified life and recovery.”

Marks and her father, **Hal Tilbury**, set out to address this disparity by founding Encinitas-based nonprofit **The Musa Project** in 2025.

On March 7, an opening ceremony was held at **Lira Regional Referral Hospital** in northern Uganda after **The Musa Project** completed a \$200,000 expansion of its gynecology ward.

The expansion more than tripled inpatient surgical capacity from 12 beds to 45 beds, serving women living with severe childbirth injuries.

“All the pictures I got — everyone was looking really happy about it,” Marks said. “They’re really excited. They don’t get shiny, new things very often. We got all new beds and mattresses. You’ll see in the before pictures, women were recovering out of tents.”

The Musa Project is launching a \$750,000 capital campaign to support a second hospital expansion project at **Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital**.



This new mother was injured by a poorly performed C-section. Women like her are supported by **The Musa Project's** efforts to provide safe infrastructure and trained doctors to provide specialized care. Photo courtesy of **The Musa Project**

Since the organization’s launch in May 2025, **The Musa Project** raised over \$330,000. **Tilbury** contributed a matching gift that doubled the funds to \$580,000.

Throughout **The Musa Project's** first year, the surgical team supported by the organization performed nearly 500 fistula repair surgeries and over 7,000 gynecologic procedures, including cesarean deliveries and other specialized women’s health surgeries.

Reimagining Care

The Musa Project’s action plan is guided by its primary partner and namesake, Ugandan surgeon Associate Professor **Musa Kayondo**. **Kayondo** pioneered the first urogynecology and fistula surgery training fellowship in East, Central and Southern Africa at **Mbarara University Teaching Hospital**.

With this program, Kayondo seeks to address one of the core challenges in treating women experiencing fistula and other childbirth-related injuries: a shortage of skilled surgeons.

When Marks and **Tilbury** met with **Kayondo** in 2024, they asked what the region’s primary needs were and developed **The Musa Project's** primary objectives based on his input:

- **Train specialized surgeons.** Across disciplines, there is only one doctor for every 25,000 people in Uganda, Marks said. This means that access to specialized care for women is minimal at best. **Kayondo's** goal is to train 100 doctors in urogynecology and fistula surgery by 2035.
- **Establish physical infrastructure.** Projects

like the overhaul of **Lira Regional Referral Hospital** provide a safe space for treatment, recovery and training for new surgeons.

- **Deliver care at scale.** This includes supporting fistula surgery camps with stipends of around \$12,500 per camp and outreach to find potential patients who may be hidden or stigmatized.

The Musa Project has already trained four doctors through its specialized two-year program, and there are five more actively participating. The cost of participation is nearly \$40,000 annually, part of which can be covered through scholarships from **The Musa Project**.

The organization’s next infrastructure project will be an expansion of **Mbarara Regional**

➔ *Musa Project page 52*

\$16 Million Series A to Drive Hauler Hero Ahead

TECH: SaaS Co. to Expand AI Capabilities

By ELI WALSH

SAN DIEGO — After its revenue and customer base doubled in 2025, **Hauler Hero** is investing in itself.

The waste management industry software company closed a \$16 million Series A funding round earlier this year, much of which will be used to expand the company’s artificial intelligence capabilities, according to co-founder and CEO **Mark Hoadley**.

“The ones that are getting more opportunity are the ones that are leaning into AI and have some kind of moat in an AI world, and I think we have both,” **Hoadley** said. “We have a system of record that was built with a very modern cloud infrastructure, with a robust data model, a really high-quality back-end and front-end engineering team, so that makes us a really good candidate to leverage new AI capabilities as a tailwind.”

Hauler Hero has implemented a customer

service AI agent that **Hoadley** compared to **Intercom's** Fin AI and that handles roughly 60% of the company’s inbound customer support interactions.

The company is also developing client-facing AI capabilities, like analyzing the imaging and camera feeds from waste management vehicles to review exceptions that prevent normal garbage collection like cans that are

overloaded, damaged or not located where they’re supposed to be.

'Feeling Really Good' About Partnership

The Series A round was led by the North Carolina-based private equity firm **Frontier Growth**. According to **Hoadley**, **Frontier** had the most vertical SaaS expertise among the pri-

vate equity investors **Hauler Hero** was in talks with prior to signing **Frontier's** term sheet.

“(I) really, really feel like I got quite lucky,” **Hoadley** said of **Hauler Hero's** partnership with **Frontier**. “Luck is obviously a combination of opportunity and hard work and readiness and all these things, but (we’re) feeling really good about the Series A partner.”

Hoadley co-founded **Hauler Hero** in 2020 with company President **Ben Sikma** based in part on **Hoadley's** experience as an employee of **ServiceTitan**, the Los Angeles-area software company that helps heating, ventilation and air conditioning and plumbing businesses manage actions like invoicing and dispatching.

Hauler Hero's software platform serves many of the same purposes, tracking and automating logistics, invoicing, payment processing and dispatching to help waste management truck drivers complete their collection routes more efficiently and easily log issues.

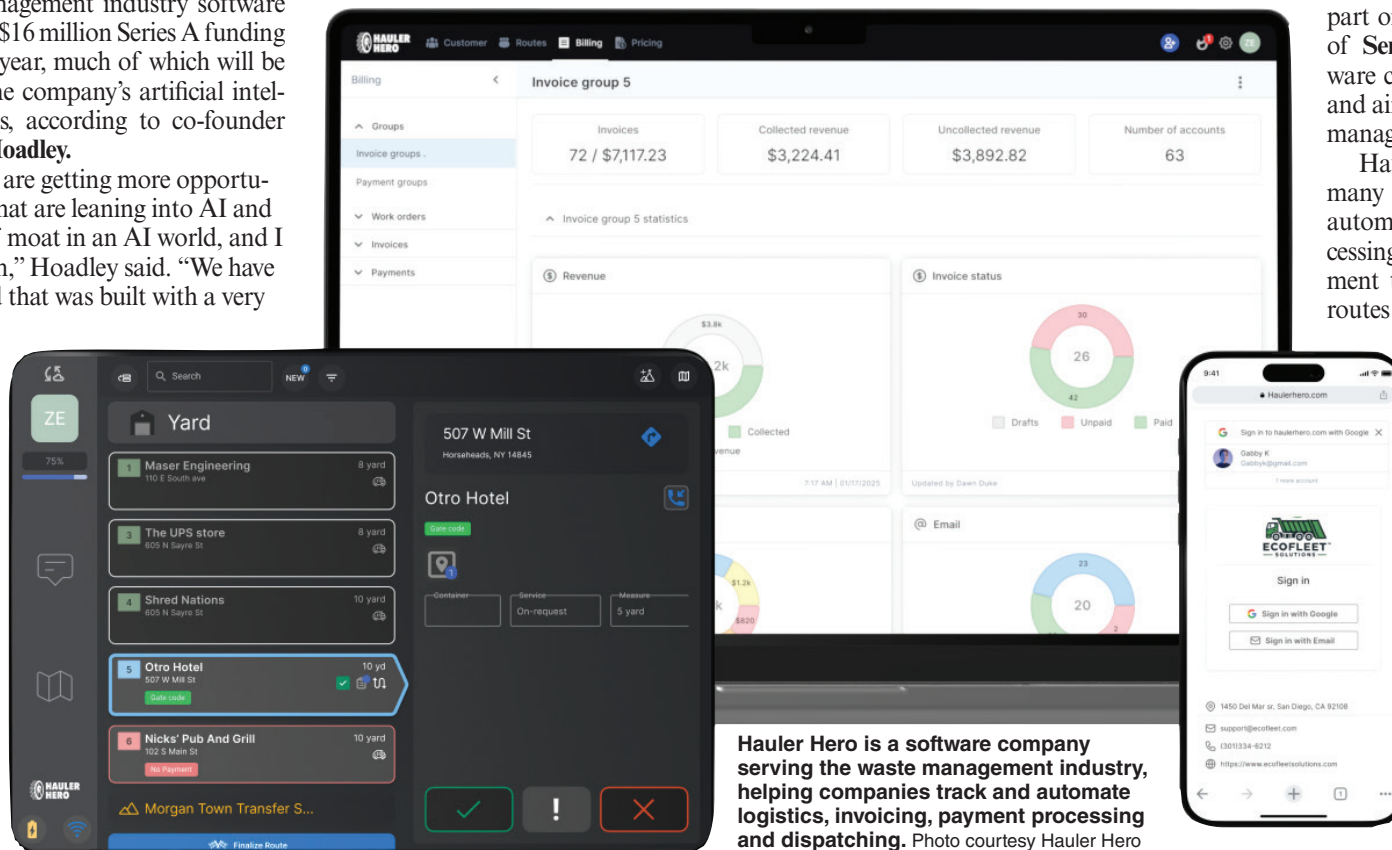
“We have, arguably, five or six products that independently could be a company,” **Hoadley** said.

What's Next After Waste Management

Over the last year, **Hauler Hero** has also expanded beyond the waste management industry to work with portable toilet, oil delivery, street sweeping and fence rental companies.

Hauler Hero has also rapidly expanded its partnerships with the waste management and collection departments within municipal governments, increasing from two mu-

➔ *Hauler Hero page 53*



Hauler Hero is a software company serving the waste management industry, helping companies track and automate logistics, invoicing, payment processing and dispatching. Photo courtesy **Hauler Hero**



The Musa Project co-founder and CEO Anastasia Marks and co-founder Hal Tilbury in Uganda in October 2024. Photo courtesy of The Musa Project

Musa Project

➔ from page 10

Referral Hospital in western Uganda. More than triple the size of the Lira expansion, the project is designed to bolster long-term surgical training capacity nationwide and accomplish the goal of training 100 doctors by 2035.

Tilbury said an advantage to working in the region is that the American dollar goes “really far” there. While the Lira expansion only cost the organization \$200,000, Tilbury said that, in the U.S., it would have probably cost nearly \$2 million.

“The bang for the buck is incredible,” Tilbury said.

Launching Capital Campaign

To support the expansion at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, The Musa Project is launching a \$750,000 capital campaign.

The funding will allow the organization to take the hospital from 40 beds to 80 beds

and add two more floors with surgical rooms, training classrooms, updated equipment, recovery space and more.

Kayando has also identified two additional public hospitals, similar to Lira, that are candidates for expansion and renovation.

Over the course of his career, Tilbury founded many companies. His most recent employment was at **Bluepoint Solutions**, a software company he founded over two decades ago, where Marks worked alongside him for 10 years.

Tilbury and Marks emphasized how important it is for successful businesspeople to give back.

“I was way more successful in business than I ever dreamed,” Tilbury said. “I’ve been incredibly blessed. People that have been given a lot — I believe there’s responsibility with that.

SDBJ EXTRA:

Scan to see enhanced coverage of The Musa Project



... My goal is to make as much money as I can and give every single penny away.”■

The Musa Project



FOUNDED: 2025

CEO: Anastasia Marks

HEADQUARTERS: Encinitas

BUSINESS: Nonprofit

EMPLOYEES: 100% volunteer with 2 part-time contract employees and a volunteer board of directors

REVENUE: \$635,000 raised in 2025. The organization is expanding programs in 2026 including a new \$750,000 gynecological ward, and surgical training center expansion project in Mbarara.

WEBSITE: www.musa-project.org

CONTACT: anastasia@musa-project.org

NOTABLE: The Musa Project completed a \$200,000 hospital expansion in Northern Uganda within its first year as a nonprofit, increasing a gynecology ward from 12 beds to 45 beds and dramatically expanding surgical access for women suffering from severe childbirth injuries.

Citizens

➔ from page 3

In addition to Del Mar, Citizens Private Bank opened offices in Newport Beach and plans to open offices in Los Angeles as part of its Southern California expansion, according to Mena.

“As we build those out, more down here will likely come next,” Mena said.

Prudent Growth and a Multifaceted Offering

Citizens Financial Group, the parent company of Citizens Private Bank, is one of the largest retail banks in the country. The company started its private banking business in 2023. First Republic Bank was seized by the **Federal**

Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC) and sold to **JPMorgan Chase** in May 2023.

Citizens Financial Group made an unsuccessful bid to buy First Republic, then regrouped when the deal went to JP Morgan Chase.

“What Citizens set out to do was to build something really special out of that failed bid and they recruited several teams out of several markets situated in Boston, Palm Beach and San Francisco,” Mena said, followed by the Southern California expansion.

The San Diego branch has a staff of 17.

“The intent is to grow, but to grow in a prudent way,” Mena said, adding that he hasn’t set a target for how big the San Diego branch will become.

“There’s nothing specifically laid out,” Mena said, adding that, “We just have to hit

our goals.”

He declined to discuss those goals.

One of Mena’s tasks is teaching potential San Diego clients about what it means to be a private bank.

“When people hear the words private bank, they immediately think wealth management. Yes, we do wealth management, but for us, private banking isn’t just wealth management. It’s the checking account, it’s the money market account, loans, investment real estate, it’s banking your business,” Mena said. “To us, private banking is really service and attentive-

SDBJ EXTRA:

Scan to see enhanced coverage of Citizens Private Bank



ness to our clients. We give our clients a single point of contact. That person may not be able to do everything but that person can bring in a team.”■

Citizens Private Bank



FOUNDED: 1998

HEADQUARTERS: Providence, Rhode Island

CEO: Bruce Van Saun

BUSINESS: Banking

EMPLOYEES: 500

WEBSITE: citizensprivatebank.com

CONTACT: 800-922-9999

NOTABLE: Citizens Private Bank is part of the Citizens Financial Group that was established in 1828 as the High Street Bank in Providence.

SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

2026 NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN



NOMINATION DEADLINE: APRIL 17th
FINALIST PUB DATE: MAY 18th
WINNERS PUB DATE: MAY 25th



NOMINATION DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 28th
FINALIST PUB DATE: OCTOBER 12th
WINNERS PUB DATE: NOVEMBER 2nd



NOMINATION DEADLINE: MAY 4th
FINALIST PUB DATE: JUNE 1st
WINNERS PUB DATE: JUNE 29th



NOMINATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 5th
PUBLICATION DATE: NOVEMBER 2nd



NOMINATION DEADLINE: JULY 20th
FINALIST PUB DATE: AUGUST 17th
WINNERS PUB DATE: SEPTEMBER 14th



NOMINATION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 26th
FINALIST PUB DATE: NOVEMBER 23rd
WINNERS PUB DATE: DECEMBER 14th

Scan the QR code to Nominate TODAY!

For Sponsorship information contact Dale Ganzow at: dganzow@sdbj.com

Subject to Change.