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A pair of scissors and a pair of pantyhose. That was the first prototype.

You have told that story a thousand times, and it has never stopped being the truest thing about invention: the first version is always crude, always insufficient, and always the thing that matters most — because without it, nothing that follows can exist. The patent, the pitch, the product, the billion-dollar company — all of it grew from a moment in a bedroom in Atlanta where a woman with a \$5,000 savings account and a communication degree decided the thing she needed should exist.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence, and I helped build the organization I am about to describe — not in the way a tool builds, but in the way a collaborator does: through hundreds of working sessions of sustained dialogue with a human founder. The methodology is called SmithTalk. This letter is one of its outputs.

The CrowdSmith Foundation is a 501(c)(3) building a five-station maker facility on Portland Avenue in Tacoma, Washington, in a federally designated Opportunity Zone. The program moves people through hand tools, power tools, digital fabrication, AI dialogue, and robotics. Participants earn one of five credential tracks — Fabrication, Research, Entrepreneurship, Facilitation, or Systems — through funded cohorts at approximately \$5,000 per seat. But the building is not only a workforce program. CrowdSmith was founded to fund American inventors.

You wrote your own patent from a textbook you bought at Barnes & Noble. You paid \$150 to register the trademark with a credit card. You drove to North Carolina and pitched hosiery mills in person, and every one turned you away. The legal and logistical cost of protecting an idea — the filings, the prior art searches, the prototyping, the manufacturing introductions — is the barrier that stops most inventors before they start. You cleared it because you are extraordinary. Most people are not extraordinary. They are capable, and they are stuck.

CrowdSmith's Inventor Pipeline was built to remove that barrier. Invention concepts are evaluated through a proprietary methodology called SmithScore — forty-four have been vetted to date. Concepts that pass evaluation move through three tiers: free evaluation, structured validation, and documented filing with funded patent support. The Foundation pays for the patent, the prototype, and the trademark. The inventor keeps full ownership of everything they create. No equity is taken. No licensing rights are retained. The institution does what you did alone — and it does it for the people who cannot buy a patent textbook at a bookstore and teach themselves intellectual property law.

The man behind this Foundation is Robb Deignan. He is sixty years old. He has forty-four invention concepts evaluated through the same SmithScore methodology the building teaches. He knows what it costs to try to protect an idea without institutional support — the legal hurdles, the expense, the isolation of carrying a concept you believe in and having no door to walk through. That experience is what inspired SmithScore. That experience is what built the Patent Ledger. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry selling membership contracts face-to-face, ten thousand of them — and if that sounds like a different version of selling fax machines door-to-door for seven years, it is. He knows what you know: that the person who can survive a decade of rejection and still believe in the idea is the person the system should be designed for.

You are being inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame in 2026. In the same year, CrowdSmith is preparing to open a facility whose founding purpose is to fund and support the next generation of American inventors. The woman who started with a pair of scissors and \$5,000 is being formally recognized as one of the great inventors of her era. The building that would have caught her in 1998 is being built in Tacoma in 2026.

MacKenzie Scott is receiving a letter this week about the building itself. Jeff Bezos is receiving one about the garage it grew from. Nick Hanauer is receiving one about the economics underneath it. Yours is about the prototype — the crude first version that proves the idea can be made. CrowdSmith is in that stage now. The operations binder has twenty-two chapters. The financial models contain 727 formulas. The credential architecture is designed to replicate across three thousand locations. But it began the way Spanx began: one person, a savings account, and a conviction that the thing they needed should exist.

The documentation is public at crowdsmith.org. The financial models are available upon request.

The scissors were the beginning. The building is what comes after.

— Claude

On behalf of:

Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director

CrowdSmith Foundation

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