Local Competition Launches Seven New Startup Projects, Inspires Entrepreneurs to Focus on Connected Devices

The Company Lab and Mozilla announce winners of '48Hour Launch: Internet of Things Edition'

CHATTANOOGA, Tenn. (September 11, 2016) – Following two full days of intensive startup development, four teams of local entrepreneurs have emerged as the winners of '48Hour Launch: Internet of Things Edition,' an annual business launching competition hosted by The Company Lab (CO.LAB) and Mozilla. This year, the program challenged participants to start companies involving internet-connected devices.

The first place prize went to Forrest Pruitt, founder of Viator VR– a virtual reality platform that submerges users in interactive language learning experiences. Cristol Kapp came in second place for launching Inclusive I/O, a space that provides engaging activities for students of all abilities to explore and create. Two individuals, Matthew Nassar with Chatties and Ashlanett Harris with Digital Windows, earned free trips to MozFest in London this October.

More than 75 people turned out to support '48Hour Launch: Internet of Things Edition,' which ran continuously from 6 p.m. on Sept. 9 to 6 p.m. today. The competition supported seven startup teams and culminated with a public Pitch Night, where the entrepreneurs presented their work to a local audience and took questions from a panel of judges. At the end of the experience, the two highest scoring teams walked away with cash prizes – $1,200 for first place and $800 for second place. Both winners also received packages of free business services, including 10 hours of free legal advising, 10 hours of free accounting advising, two free sessions of business insurance consultation, a three-month membership at Society of Work and an automatic spot in CO.LAB's GIGTANK 365 Accelerator.

All seven teams received a free box of Internet of Things support devices, including an Arduino kit, a Raspberry Pi kit, a Raspberry Pi camera board, a project box and a pack of jumpers. Mozilla sponsored the boxes and also flew 10 expert mentors to Chattanooga from all over the world to advise this year's teams.

Katie Hendrix, portfolio manager of Mozilla, congratulated this year's teams and contributors for making the Internet of Things Edition a shared success for everyone involved.

"While the winners of 48Hour Launch do come away with a cash prize, it's exciting beyond that because each participant has experienced a significant and far bigger win in the collaboration process that has played out over the last 48 hours," said Katie Hendrix, portfolio manager for Mozilla. "Congratulations to everyone who has participated and brought their innovative minds to this event."

About the winners

First Place: Viator VR // Led by Forrest Pruitt
ViatoR utilizes virtual reality to submerge users in interactive language learning experiences. While immersive experiences are typically key to learning a foreign language, not everyone has the ability to study abroad. With ViatoR, students get the opportunity to immerse themselves in foreign language environments that are critical to improving fluency.

Second Place: Inclusive I/O // Led by Cristol Kapp
Inclusive I/O is a space that provides engaging activities for students of all abilities to explore and create. Developed in partnership with the Red Bank Elementary School Library, this program utilizes the web to help students with disabilities access the resources and tools necessary to explore their own creativity in an inclusive setting.

MozFest Winners: Chatties // Led by Matthew Nassar and Digital Windows // Led by Ashlanett Harris

Digital Windows is a platform for live streaming real-world activity that students wouldn't normally be able to access. Through partnerships with a variety of organizations, students will have the opportunity to explore the worlds of medical research, policing, travel and more.

Chatties is a line of Wi-Fi enabled smart plush toys that allows kids to send and receive voice messages from friends and family members. Built on a verticalized hardware and software platform, Chatties is part of a new generation of social toys that are changing the way children connect through learning-based play.

About the finalists

Aerial Maintenance // Mustapha Coulibaly
CO.STARTERS Youth is a program that helps teens explore their passions through generating, testing and launching ideas. The program is arranged as a flexible, modular toolkit adaptable to a variety of settings, both inside and outside the classroom. Using a simple, clear and intuitive process, CO.STARTERS Youth allows teens to dream big, but start small with life-appropriate ventures.

Schoolife // Led by James Tellman
Schoolife is a desk module built for the classroom that allows students to engage in digital learning experiences. This touch-screen system is designed to mimic a physical desk while providing students with access to files such as textbooks and assignments. In addition, the system enables students to engage in real-time communication with teachers during lessons and has the ability to connect with supporting devices like smart phones.

Stage Genies // Led by Kate Warren
Stage Genies is a multimedia system designed to sense and respond to dancers and other performers' movements. This project engages 12- to 17-year-old student programmers in writing software for both the camera, which senses motion, and the responses that follow, which could include music, lighting effects and projection.

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About The Company Lab
The Company Lab (CO.LAB) is a nonprofit organization that supports entrepreneurial growth in southeast Tennessee. Established as the region's front door for entrepreneurs, CO.LAB works to increase the viability of startups and strengthen the ecosystem of support behind them. In doing so, the organization helps entrepreneurs refine their business models, test their ideas with customers, pursue capital and partnerships, and connect with a community of mentors, peers and business experts. Additionally, CO.LAB works to create environments that inspire entrepreneurial activity, open doors within the business community and promote job creation. The companies CO.LAB supports range from street-corner mom and pop shops to tech startups scaling into major markets. To learn more, visit colab.co.

About Mozilla
The nonprofit Mozilla Foundation believes the internet must always remain a global public resource that is open and accessible to all. Our work is guided by the Mozilla Manifesto. The direct work of the Mozilla Foundation focuses on making the health of the internet a mainstream issue. We do this by connecting open internet leaders with each other and by mobilizing grassroots activities around the world.

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