

Mobile apps, educational software take top prizes at Startup Weekend Athens competition

ATHENS, Ohio (Jan. 28, 2013)—Three teams of aspiring entrepreneurs who created mobile apps and software for education, entertainment and marketing purposes took the top prizes at the second annual Startup Weekend Athens competition Sunday.

Two dozen participants, including current and former students of Ohio University and other regional educational institutions, organized into six teams over the weekend to develop new business products and companies. Startup Weekend is a 54-hour event that offers entrepreneurs a chance to pitch an idea, develop partnerships and gain expert coaching and advice from seasoned professionals. Hundreds of Startup Weekend events are held around the globe each year.

The weekend's top prize went to RapChat, a new mobile app that allows users to record and exchange musical raps with friends. Developers Seth Miller and Brandon Logan told judges that learning to rap is one of the top "how to" Google searches. College student focus groups expressed high interest in the proposed product. The team took home \$1,000 in prizes.

Second place went to LiveIn, a mobile app that allows users to find and share local events, as well as create virtual and hard copy posters to further promote such events on social media and in the community. The team of Sicong Li, Erica Staeuble and Ben Weibel pitched the product as "Instagram for Events" and took home \$750 in prizes.

A new educational software system called Lydria took third place honors. The team led by Matt Spolar pitched the product as an alternative to software such as Blackboard and Moodle that allows university professors and students to virtually interface. Lydria intends to overcome the limitations of those programs to create a more effective educational communication tool, Spolar said. The team took home \$500 in prizes. Members of the team included Daniel Williams, Sam Pattantyus, Jenny Wu, John Herbert, Annie Gullo and Jimmy Clark.

The winning teams will receive gift cards to purchase additional products and services that can help advance their business concepts.

Other products developed over the weekend include an online magazine kiosk that allows users to purchase the products in magazine advertisements, a mobile campus marketplace and a website that allows users to find and organize online information by interest.

The Startup Weekend event is an effective way to introduce aspiring entrepreneurs to what it takes to develop a product concept and business plan, said Jennifer Simon,

director of Ohio University's Innovation Center and an organizer of the event.

"It's not just about the idea—it's about the team. Startup Weekend is hands down the best way to find someone you can actually launch a startup with," she said. "By spending a weekend working to build scalable companies that solve real-world problems, participants can build long-lasting relationships and possibly walk away with a job or even an investor."

On average, half of Startup Weekend's attendees have technical or design backgrounds, and the other half have business backgrounds.

Startup Weekend, powered by the Kauffman Foundation, supports competitions around the globe to foster entrepreneurship and new business creation. More than 36 percent of Startup Weekend startups are still going strong after three months, and roughly 80 percent of participants plan on continuing working with their team or startup after the weekend. The program has more than 45,000 alumni worldwide.

The sponsors of Startup Weekend Athens, Ohio are Athens County Business Remixed, TechGROWTH Ohio, Athens Chamber of Commerce and the Ohio University Innovation Center, Vice President for Research and Creative Activity and Center for Entrepreneurship.

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