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UNH Announces Winners of the 2015 N.H. Social Venture Innovation Challenge

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Caption: In the student track of the Social Venture Innovation Challenge at the University of New Hampshire, Matt Wilhelm (third from left), a UNH master's student in public administration, won first place. Also pictured (l to r) are Atlanta McIlwraithe and Eric Carlson from Timberland and Gary Hirshberg, co-founder and chairman of Stonyfield Farm. Photo Credit: Perry Smith Photography

DURHAM, N.H. – A not-for-profit gathering place for young professionals and an analytics company with the goal of keeping insurance companies honest were the winning ideas in the 2015 New Hampshire Social Venture Innovation Challenge at the University of New Hampshire. The final round of 16 finalists was judged by a dozen leading social venture founders, leaders and investors from New Hampshire and beyond.

Matt Wilhelm, a UNH master's student in public administration, won in the student track for his idea to create Old Sol Music Hall, a not-for-profit concert venue and community center in downtown Manchester committed to building social capital for young professionals. He received $5,000.

In the community track Dan Karr of Bedford won the first place prize of $10,000 for his idea to create ValChoice, an analytics company to protect consumers, particularly in disadvantaged groups, from auto and home insurance companies that don't deliver the protection and value promised. In addition, he will receive 100 hours of consulting from PixelMEDIA, a leading web design & development, ecommerce strategy, and application design firm, and 12 months of flex membership (worth $150 per month) for use of a co-working space in one of many locations in New Hampshire, provided by Alpha Loft, a non-profit organization dedicated to accelerating the development of early-stage, scalable businesses.

The second place team in the student track was Connected C&D. The team won $3,000 for their idea to divert all ABC waste from landfills in the Greater Portsmouth area by establishing and maintaining connections with construction, demolition and recycling agencies. Team members were: Pia Marciano, junior in environmental engineering; Amy LeBel, a junior in environmental engineering; Kendall Sebastian, a senior in Spanish and business administration; and Justin Keefe, a senior in civil engineering. All are students at UNH.

The third place team in the student track was Project OASIS. The team won $2,000 for its plan to provide families with fresh vegetables and fish-based protein by developing a low coast, easily maintainable aquaponics system that runs on renewable energy. Team members were: Paige Balcom, a senior in mechanical engineering; Sid Nigam, a senior in mechanical engineering and international affairs; Kendre Rodriguez, a senior in business administration; Will Taveras, a senior in mechanical engineering; and Allison Wood, a senior in mechanical engineering. All are students at UNH.

In the community track, second place (with a prize of $5,000) went to Asha Stuart from Hooksett for Creole Ble, a non-profit seafood supply chain micro-enterprise with plans to create a sustainable seafood ecosystem that will provide all Haitian people with access to quality and affordable seafood products.

Third place in the community track went to UNH Solar Power for Schools, a plan to bring solar power to hundreds of students who currently lack access to electricity. The team received $2,500 and included: Katerina Messologitis of Newmarket, a 2015 UNH alumna and current graduate student; Tegan O'Neill of Dover, a 2014 UNH alumna and current graduate student; Zachary Angelini of Newmarket, a 2014 UNH alumnus and current graduate student; Taygra Longstaff of Boulder, Colo., a 2015 UNH alumna; and Abygail Mangar of Boston, a 2014 UNH alumna.

In the student track the judges also awarded an honorable mention and $1,000 to Road Recycle, which proposes to buy unwanted sand byproduct from foundry companies and sell it to construction companies to use as road base. The teams was compromised of UNH seniors Alyssa Aligata, environmental engineering; Sydney Crogan, business administration; Micaela Guglielmi, environmental engineering; and Alexa Mack, environmental engineering.

In the community track, the judges awarded an honorable mention to a team of students from Phillips Exeter Academy for their idea to improve the efficiency of primary care by bringing the doctor's office to the patient. The students of RAD Health were Vinjai Vale, Divya Bade, Abhijay Bhatnagar, Connie Cai, and Gillian Chu.
An annual signature program of UNH, the challenge engages aspiring and practicing student and community social entrepreneurs in designing novel, sustainable, business-orientated solutions to some of society's most pressing social and environmental challenges. The SVIC is an idea-stage competition with the goal of inspiring innovative, solution-orientated thinking and providing a forum to shine a light on these ideas. Challenge winners receive awards that help bring needed resources to advance these promising models.

Major supporters of the Challenge include Timberland, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, PixelMEDIA and Alpha Loft.
The program is a collaborative, interdisciplinary event, organized at UNH by the Center for Social Innovation and Enterprise, and co-hosted by the Carsey School of Public Policy, NH EPSCoR, the Peter T. Paul College of Business & Economics, UNH Sustainability Institute, UNHInnovation, and Net Impact UNH.

Photos for download:
http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/11/images/img-8_PAS3646.jpg

Caption: In the community track of the Social Venture Innovation Challenge at the University of New Hampshire, Dan Karr of Bedford (center) won first place. Also pictured (l to r) are Michael Wilson of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation and Gary Hirshberg, co-founder and chairman of Stonyfield Farm.
Photo Credit: Perry Smith Photography

http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2015/11/images/img-4_PAS3664.jpg
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