Local Hackers Create Winning Apps at Alameda County Apps Challenge 2014.1

County's Third Hackathon is Most Successful Ever

DUBLIN - A clever mobile app that allows users to prepare for a disaster – and helps them to be located in a calamity's aftermath - was the first-place winner at Alameda County Apps Challenge 2014.1, an event on Saturday, May 3, that allowed residents to explore Alameda County's Open Data offerings and help make local government more accessible.

The 8-member team that created the app <u>ACcess Help</u> will share a $3,000 prize for their creation, which provides key resource information should disaster strike and gives the user the ability to text their location to emergency responders if they need assistance. The winning team included a father and his 13-year-old son.

Saturday's event at Dublin High School was the third Apps Challenge Alameda County has sponsored to promote its Open Data Portal and to engage the community, youth and County employees to help local government become more accessible, efficient and effective.   Alameda County was the first County in California to conduct such "hackathon" events to engage the community about its Open Data offerings and its commitment to government transparency; several counties have since followed Alameda County's lead.

"This was our largest Apps Challenge to date, with 170 participants who brought boundless energy to the process of building apps using Open Data to build stronger connections between Alameda County government and the residents we serve,'' said Susan S. Muranishi, Alameda County Administrator.

Muranishi said the event underscores the County's leadership on the issue of government transparency. In addition to launching its own [Open Data Portal](#), which currently boasts more than 140 datasets, the County has created several web and mobile applications to make government services more accessible – including a "My Voter" app that allows people to check their voter registration status on phones and mobile devices; and a "My Property" app that allows users to obtain a wealth of information about any property in the County on the go.

ACcess Help edged-out Second Prize-winner, <u>Is This Biz Green</u>, a creative app that sifts through the County's Green Business dataset and identify certified local green businesses.   The app's designer was a 14-year-old high school student from Pleasanton who won a $1,500 prize.

In all, 22 apps and app concepts were presented at the latest Alameda County Apps Challenge. Presentations were given by individuals and teams of as many as 10 participants.

About half of the participants were under the age of 18. "It was inspiring to see so many young people in this competition," said Alameda County Supervisor Scott Haggerty, who hosted the event held in his district.

"This was a great opportunity to help ignite their interest in county government and the role it plays to deliver information that is meaningful to our constituents," said Haggerty. "This exercise helped bring us closer to a future generation of voters, taxpayers and users of county services."

A $500 Third Prize was awarded to the creators of Alameda Move, an app that seeks to make a positive impact on community health by reducing obesity rates. The app would encourage users to adopt healthy habits and connect them with exercise-related activities in their community. This team was composed of a mother from San Ramon, her daughter and three of the daughter's sixth-grade classmates. All of the girls are participants in an East Bay program called "Girls in Tek'' that teaches girls programming skills and helps them to have fun with technology.

The latest Apps Challenge included a first-ever Esri Award, designated for hackers who best used the Esri mapping technology to create an Open Data app. The award went to three men from Brazil currently living in Alameda while studying computer science in the Bay Area. Their app, AC Jobs, is designed to help people find job opportunities in Alameda County.

There also were two honorable mention winners – an app called My Farmer that is designed to be a Yelp! for farmer's markets; and GaLa, which helps the user find venues in Alameda County that are available to book.

County officials said Dublin High School proved to be an excellent venue for the event, with spacious and fully equipped modern facilities and school staff that was deeply invested in the success of the Apps Challenge. Officials who attended the event included Rep. Eric Swalwell, Dublin Mayor Tim Sbranti and Livermore Mayor John Marchand.

Tim Dupuis, Alameda County CIO/Registrar of Voters and Master of Ceremonies, said he also was impressed by the great turnout and the large number of youth.

"All ages collaborated together in this one-day event to analyze Alameda County's open data and build some very creative apps and app concepts,'' Dupuis said. "Each event brings something new to our goal of engaging citizens through technology. I am always surprised by what our community can do in a short period of time and am encouraged by the creativity shown by youth and young adults who participated on Saturday.''