

For Immediate Release
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Knight News Challenge First-Year Winners Announced at E&P/Mediaweek Interactive Media Conference

- **Hi-res photos of winners:** kflinks.com/knc-photos

- **Winner bios and project descriptions:** kflinks.com/knc-bios

- **General media contact:** Marc Fest, Knight Foundation director of communications, 305-908-2677, fest@knightfdn.org

MIAMI — The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, top young computer programmers and bloggers, and MTV are among the 25 first-year winners of the Knight News Challenge, announced today at the Editor & Publisher/Mediaweek Interactive Media Conference and Trade Show in Miami. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation funded the contest with \$25 million over five years to help lead journalism into its digital future.

The first-year winners all proposed innovative ideas for using digital news and information to build and bind community in specific geographic areas.

- The Media Lab and Comparative Media Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology receive **\$5 million** to create a Center for Future Civic Media to develop, test and study new forms of high-tech community news.
- Journalist/web developer Adrian Holovaty, creator of chicagocrime.org, receives **\$1.1 million** to create a series of city-specific web sites devoted to public records and hyper-local information.
- VillageSoup in Maine receives **\$885,000** to build free software to allow others to replicate the citizen journalism and community participation site VillageSoup.
- MTV receives **\$700,000** to establish a Knight Mobile Youth Journalist (Knight “MyJos”) in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia to report weekly – on cell phones, and other media – on key issues including the environment, 2008 presidential election and sexual health.
- Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, receives **\$639,000** for nine full journalism scholarships for students who have undergraduate degrees in computer science.
- The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University receives **\$552,000** to create an “incubator,”

where students will learn how to create and launch digital media products.

18 more winners receive prizes between \$25,000 and \$340,000. Nine bloggers will receive grants of \$15,000 each to blog about topics ranging from GPS tracking devices to out-of-the-box community publishing solutions. All winners will maintain blogs about their projects.

Says Alberto Ibargüen, Knight Foundation's President and CEO: "We want to spur discovery of how digital platforms can be used to disseminate news and information on a timely basis within a defined geographic space, and thereby build and bind community. That's what newspapers and local television stations used to do in the 20th century, and it's something that our communities still need today. The contest was open—and will stay open next year—to anyone anywhere in the world because 'community' is something we all can define."

Background on the winning entries:

MIT

With its **\$5 million** Knight News Challenge award to the Media Lab and the Comparative Media Studies Program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Knight Foundation teams up with one of world's premier technological innovators. MIT will create a Center for Future Civic Media to test and investigate civic media in local communities. The center pairs the technological innovation of the Media Lab with the social and cultural expertise of the Comparative Media Studies Program.

"We are moving to a Fifth Estate where everyone is able to pool their knowledge, share experience and expertise, and speak truth to power," says Chris Csikszentmihályi (pronounced Cheek-sent-me-hi), MIT's director of the Computing Culture Research Group, who will lead the center as co-director, together with Henry Jenkins, co-director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program. Says Jenkins: "We now have more than a decade's worth of research into the kinds of online communities which emerge within networked cultures. With this project, we seek to draw on that research to strengthen people's ties to their own local communities." The Center will develop new theories, techniques, technologies and practices that support and foster community news and civic engagement. "All good journalists worry about what the digital revolution is doing to the news citizens need to run their communities and their lives. Now, the awesome array of science and technology at MIT will focus on this question. From their experiments we expect to see a new generation of useful community news technology and technique," says Eric Newton, Knight Foundation's vice president/journalism program.

Adrian Holovaty

First-year winner Adrian Holovaty, 26, has created interactive web applications such as the award-winning chicagocrime.org. The Knight News Challenge, he says, "is a fantastic program because it encourages innovation in the

journalism industry – an industry that sorely needs it." His winning project was awarded **\$1.1 million** to create a series of city data sites presenting address-specific news and information. The 10 cities will include the Knight cities of Miami, Philadelphia, Detroit, San Jose and Charlotte.

Says Knight Foundation's journalism program officer Gary Kebbel: "Adrian will make it easy for people to learn more about life around them, so they can react to it if they want. Depending on what data is available in the various cities, people might learn if there's a new business permit for their neighborhood, or if a restaurant has a health violation or a public school is going to close. In addition, people quickly will see what the newspapers and bloggers are saying about those things." Holovaty has worked at the web sites of the well-regarded Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World and, most recently, the Washington Post.

VillageSoup

Richard Anderson has received **\$885,000** to rewrite the VillageSoup online publishing platform from its original proprietary software to a new open-source publishing system. It will field-test this system in its existing Times/Citizen newspaper operations and in up to 12 additional communities. After successful field testing and debugging in year two of the grant, it will make this new publishing system available to anyone. VillageSoup launched in 1996 as a for-profit company that developed web applications for local businesses and used news to drive traffic to those sites. A key element of its business model, even back in 1996, was community discussion and user-contributed content. Says Anderson: "Ultimately, the publishing system will be made available to anyone who wants to start a hyper-local news and advertising site. This all-in-one solution will encourage greater citizen journalism."

MTV

MTV will use its **\$700,000** Knight News Challenge grant to empower one young person in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to cover issues of prime importance to today's youth - such as the environment, upcoming presidential election and sexual health - as Knight Mobile Youth Journalists. Knight "MyJos" will create video news reports for multimedia distribution, including online and over cell phones. The regularly produced reports will be voted on by the MTV audience, and the most popular will be showcased across MTV's platforms. By enabling young adults to report on issues that affect them most, and distribute their reports via the emerging devices and media most prevalent in their lives, MTV continues to offer young people new, innovative ways to make their voices heard on today's most pressing issues. " This initiative will offer our audience a powerful new platform to educate their peers on the issues that most profoundly impact young people, connect and collectively take action," says Ian Rowe, MTV's vice president of strategic partnerships and public affairs. Says Knight's Gary Kebbel: "MTV will help us tap into how youth use the devices they are most comfortable with - their cell phones, computers and other mobile devices - to convey video news reports created by and for youth." The network is planning to publicly discuss what works and doesn't when engaging young people about social and political issues. MTV will

produce a public document describing how the Knight Mobile Youth Journalists created mobile content and television content. Its public analysis will include what content was most downloaded and most viewed.

Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University

Rich Gordon at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism has received **\$639,000** to create an academic program blending computer science and journalism, to fill a staffing void at many digital news sites. The equivalent of nine full scholarships, including a \$25,000 stipend, will be distributed to top computer science students who want to receive a master's degree in journalism. Both the program's teaching materials and the students' work will be posted on Medill's web site. The journalist/programmers are expected to get journalism jobs, recognize newsworthy data, understand how to make it useful to citizens and find creative ways to deliver that data using new technologies. The goals: for the computing students to learn more about journalism, and for the journalism students to learn more about computing. Says Rich Gordon: "Many programmers find themselves doing work that is either uninteresting or unimportant to the future of our society. But a democratic society in the digital age needs people who understand both journalism and technology. I hope the Knight News Challenge scholarships will generate interest in journalism among people with programming backgrounds who might not otherwise have considered our field as an interesting area in which to apply their talents."

Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University

A **\$552,000** Knight News Challenge grant will establish the Knight-Kauffman Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University. The director of the center will be a digital media innovator, with a background in multimedia journalism. A second professor teaching in the center will be a digital media entrepreneur. Students from journalism, engineering, business and design will learn to work in teams to create and market new journalism products or tools – at least six in the first year alone, and as many as a dozen in succeeding years. The center will work with the Cronkite School's center for new media innovation to turn creative ideas into practical products. It will be a model for interdisciplinary teaching and new-product creation at both universities and news organizations. Says Christopher Callahan, founding dean of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication: "Emerging technologies, new methods of storytelling, interactivity with news consumers and innovative ways of thinking about the news all give promise for a better news media future, a future that can engage news consumers, build communities and increase participation in the democracy. The Knight-Kauffman Center for New Media Entrepreneurship will harness that promise and develop innovative new media products while growing a cadre of talented young entrepreneurs trained to meet the needs of a new generation of news consumers."

A complete list of all winners and their projects is attached to this release. It is also available at www.kflinks.com/knc-winners.

The Knight News Challenge is open to anyone. Applications for the 2007 Knight News Challenge round can be submitted at www.newschallenge.org starting July 1. Application deadline will be Oct. 15.

The Knight News Challenge jurors were: Claudia Cenicerros, senior director of content strategy and partnerships, Cisco Media Solutions Group; Mary Lou Fulton, vice president of audience development, The Bakersfield Californian; Eduardo Hauser, founder, DailyMe, publisher of personalized newspapers; Hilary Schneider, senior vice president, Yahoo!; and Rich Skrenta, co-founder/CEO, Topix.net.

Knight Foundation is a sponsor of the Interactive Media Conference and Trade Show 2007, a gathering for the discussion of digital media issues attended by media representatives from the business and editorial side. More information is available at www.interactivemediaconference.com. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation promotes journalism excellence worldwide and invests in the vitality of 26 communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. Knight Foundation supports ideas and projects that create transformational change. For more, visit www.knightfdn.org.

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