

News Release

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Knight Foundation to Award Millions for Digital Experiments in Community News

*News Challenge Seeks Cutting-Edge Ideas from Anyone, Anywhere;
'You Invent It. We Fund It!'*

MIAMI – The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation has launched year two of the Knight News Challenge, a contest awarding as much as \$5 million for innovative ideas using digital experiments to transform community news.

Do you have a big idea for informing and inspiring community using bits and bytes? Cell phone documentaries? New operating software for news collectors? Journalism games? Nothing is too far out to qualify. With the slogan “You Invent It. We Fund It!” the contest is open to community-minded innovators worldwide, from software designers to journalists to citizens and students of any age.

The Knight News Challenge contest aims to use digitally delivered news and information to enhance physical communities and improve the lives of people where they live, work and vote. “Jim and Jack Knight fostered community through their newspapers,” said Alberto Ibarguen, president and CEO of Knight Foundation. “The Knight News Challenge hopes to discover innovative ways of using cyberspace to bring communities together.”

The first year of the contest concluded with grants to 25 individuals and private and public entities ranging from MIT to MTV. Some first-year winning projects included:

- New software that links databases, allowing citizens to learn (and act on) civic information about their neighborhood or block.
- Cell phone distribution of video news reports from mobile young journalists on the 2008 presidential election.
- Online games to inform and engage players about key issues confronting New York City.
- An online environment which lets citizens “play” through a complex, evolving news story through interaction with the newsmakers.
- Digital newscasts for Philadelphia’s immigrant community distributed through a new citywide wireless platform.

Winning entries must have three elements: 1) use of a digital media; 2) delivery of news

or information on a shared basis to 3) a geographically defined community. Although there is a category for commercial applications, most entries are “open-source” and must share the software and knowledge created.

This year, for the first time, the web site – www.newschallenge.org – also will allow entrants to invite public comment that will help improve their entries.

“Virtual communities spring up every day. They don’t need our help. Geographic communities are the building blocks of democracy. They do need help,” said Gary Kebbel, Knight journalism program officer and the contest’s coordinator.

The foundation plans to invest at least \$25 million over five years in the search for bold community news experiments.

A simple online entry form is available at www.newschallenge.org. The web site will accept applications through Oct. 15. Winners should be announced by the spring of 2008.

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation invests in journalism excellence worldwide and in the vitality of the U.S. communities. Since 1950 the foundation has granted more than \$300 million to advance quality journalism and freedom of expression. It focuses on projects with the potential to create transformational change. For more, visit www.knightfoundation.org.