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HACKATHON TO END HUNGER SPARKS NEW IDEAS TO FEED CHILDREN IN NEED

Inaugural event gathers top Chicago tech talent to develop innovative solutions in the fight against child hunger. One of five Chicago children don't know where their next meal will come from

CHICAGO – The first-ever Hackathon to End Hunger brought together members of Chicago's growing technology sector under a common goal – develop tech-based solutions to the problem of child hunger in Cook County. The event, organized by the Greater Chicago Food Depository's Hack Hunger steering committee, was hosted at Illinois Technology Association/TechNexus on Saturday, Sept. 24.

The event was attended over 70 developers from many of the top technology companies in Chicago. Hackathon participants collaborated in teams to examine child hunger through a technology lens and develop ideas and applications that overcome barriers between young people and free nutritious meals.

"Child hunger in Chicago doesn't have to be a reality," said Kate Maehr, executive director and CEO of the Food Depository. "Sadly, one in five children in our community lacks access to the food they need to be healthy and achieve their full potential. This is a problem we can solve and Chicago's technology sector is full of innovative problem solvers."

Ten teams worked for 12 hours building technology solutions to address childhood hunger. The winning team developed a plan for a prototype mobile app that uses games and rewards to guide teens to summer meal sites in their neighborhoods, a critical access point for food. Team members included Mukesh Chhatani, Power Reviews; Ariel Diamond, Jellyvision; Kate Donaldson, Jellyvision; Matt Godbolt, DRW; Candice Haddad, Jellyvision; and Jeff Singer, Strata Decision Technology. A panel of expert judges selected this solution based on innovation, accessibility and scalability.

"This Hackathon demonstrated the potential and ability of Chicago's tech community to tackle social issues and rally around a common cause," said Dan Michelson, CEO of Strata Decision Technology and co-chair of the Hack Hunger steering committee. "Together, we can help address issues that can make a real and meaningful difference for those most in need in Chicago. Childhood hunger is a very real, but addressable issue. The ideas and applications that were developed in a few hours were extraordinary."

The Hackathon to End Hunger was generously sponsored by Crain's Chicago Business, Tyson Foods, Illinois Technology Association/TechNexus, Strata Decision Technology, Digitas LBi, Jellyvision,

PowerReviews, Solstice Mobile, SWC Technology Partners, Lyfe Kitchen and Whole Foods Market Chicago.

The Hack Hunger steering committee is co-chaired by Michelson and Derek Groothuis. Committee members include Kriz Kazibut of Bambu by Sprout Social, Nick Cromydas of New Coast Ventures, Ryan Erwin of Orbit Media Studios, Tony Bailey and Kris Langager of Digitas LBi and David Snyder of Crain's Chicago Business.

About the Greater Chicago Food Depository

The Greater Chicago Food Depository, Chicago's food bank, is a nonprofit food distribution and training center providing food for hungry people while striving to end hunger in our community. The Food Depository, founded in 1979, makes a daily impact across Cook County with a network of 650 pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, mobile programs, children's programs, older adult programs and innovative responses that address the root causes of hunger. Last year, the Food Depository distributed 70 million pounds of shelf-stable food, fresh produce, dairy products and meat, the equivalent of 160,000 meals every day. For more information, visit chicagosfoodbank.org or call 773-247-FOOD.

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