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#SRQHacks “Hack Your Education” Education Foundation of Sarasota County hosts 2nd Annual Hackathon

Sarasota, FL (Oct 17, 2017) Powered by the Education Foundation of Sarasota County, the region’s second annual student hackathon was held October 13-15, 2017, at Ringling College of Art + Design. The intense, three-day immersive experience paired nearly 100 students age 13-18 years old with over 40 mentors, forming 10 teams that worked to “hack their education” by creating technological applications designed to advance student learning. The event was made possible thanks to lead event sponsor Gulf Coast Community Foundation with support from Catalina Charitable Foundation, Sarasota Underground, Informa, WUSF Public Media, LogicJunction and United Data Technologies.

“Watching the student presentations and interaction with community mentors is nothing short of inspiring,” noted Jennifer Vigne, President of the Education Foundation of Sarasota County. “#SRQHacks embodies more than just our mission. This event showcases the tremendous capacity, curiosity and creativity our students can unlock when they are involved in engaging project-based learning experiences. It’s also fair to mention how much we learned from the students themselves!”

Team Carma took the grand prize, pitching an application they described as the “uber for students.” Utilizing properly screened adult volunteers, Carma would allow students to have safe transportation to and from school and school-related activities while notifying parents of their whereabouts throughout the ride. Members of the winning team each received an Apple iPad Pro. An added surprise was an invitation by SRQMedia CEO Lisl Liang to have Team Carma attend the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce Symposia on Transportation as her guest.

Team Focalpoint took runner-up with an in-school application that combines and builds on the features of Blackboard and Remind while encouraging student engagement. Each member of Team Focalpoint received an Amazon Echo prize pack.

In his comments to the participants, Superintendent of Sarasota County Schools Dr. Todd Bowden remarked, “it is rare when someone steps forward and presents me with both a problem and a solution.” He expressed his enthusiasm for the incredible work done by the teams over just three days and made note of the recurring themes of added student engagement in each presentation.

The 2nd Annual #SRQHacks connected community professionals from the technology, design and business fields with students from 21 area schools with every Sarasota County middle and high school represented. With “Hack Your Education” as the overarching theme, each of the 10 student/mentor teams created a mobile application and corresponding business plan to address a specific area of need identified by the students. The weekend event concluded with a “Shark Tank” style pitch by each team to a panel of judges that included Dr. Todd Bowden (Superintendent of Sarasota County Schools), Douglas Cherry (Intellectual Patent Attorney at Shumaker, Loop and Kendrick LLP), Anne Essner (Board Member of Gulf Coast Community Foundation), Lisl Liang (CEO of SRQ Media), Anand Pallegar (CEO, DreamLarge), Jon Stuart (SCORE Mentor) and the Honorable Charles Williams (Chief Judge of the Twelfth Judicial Circuit Court).

About the 2017 #SRQHacks Hackathon

The pace of change due to technological advances is moving fast. So fast that 85% of jobs that will exist in 2030 haven’t even been invented, according to a report authored by the Institute for the Future (ITF) and a panel of 20 tech, business and academic experts from around the world. During the next 10 years, there will be 1 million more computing jobs than there are graduating students to fill them. Thirty percent of jobs will require technology and coding skills. These facts have led to increased demand for coding classes that train students in logic, critical thinking and design.

However, the existing classes offered can take students only so far; aspiring coders need access to more advanced training to be successful. With 52 percent of Sarasota County students eligible for free or reduced lunch, there are many children without resources needed to train for the workforce of tomorrow. With this in mind, the Education Foundation established #SRQHacks in 2016. The theme of the second annual event focused on education, allowing students to “hack” their education by identifying obstacles and designing applications to overcome these hurdles and provide a more positive learning environment.

About the Education Foundation of Sarasota County

The Education Foundation of Sarasota County is an independent partner working to advance philanthropic support for Sarasota County Schools. Its mission is to enhance the potential of students, promote excellence in teaching and inspire innovation in education. Guided by the belief that education changes lives, the Education Foundation strives to match each donor’s passion with high-impact projects created to ensure students graduate with purpose and are prepared for a post-secondary pathway. The Education Foundation of Sarasota County and its philanthropic investors are champions for students, teachers, and schools. For more information on how to be a champion for education, visit EdFoundationSRQ.org.

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