



Smithsonian and Cricket Media Launch the 6th Annual Spark! Lab Invent It Challenge for Kids Worldwide

This year's focus is on designing planet-friendly solutions for real-world environmental issues

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WASHINGTON, DC—January 17, 2017 - It's that time of year again for all kid-inventors to put on their innovative thinking caps! The official launch of the 6th annual Global Spark!Lab Invent It Challenge is January 17th-- just in time to celebrate Kid Inventors' Day, which celebrates the important role children play in sparking innovation worldwide.

Cricket Media, in partnership with the Smithsonian's Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation, today opens the call for entries for the Spark!Lab Invent It Challenge. The Challenge offers eligible children from around the world the opportunity to showcase their creative thinking on a global stage, with the opportunity to win exciting prizes such as a patent consultation from Nelson Mullins, , LEGO kit, books from Smithsonian, and subscriptions to Cricket Media's Science Magazines. Individual students and entire classrooms (K-12) serving children between the ages of 5-21 are encouraged to participate.

This year's Challenge invites kids to think about a real-world environmental issue and design a planet-friendly solution. Kids are guided to look at the world around them and think about the environmental challenges facing people and their families, communities and the world. Specifically, the Challenge encourages them to tackle issues such as water scarcity, climate change, air or water pollution, endangered species and natural resource loss..

"Every year we are inspired by the innovation and creativity of kids worldwide in tackling this increasingly important challenge," said Stephanie Sharis, Chief Executive Officer, Cricket Media. "We are honored to once again join with the Smithsonian's Lemelson Center and Spark!Lab to engage kids to share their ideas and do good in the world, which encourage us all to make a difference."

Highlights from the 2016 Invent It! Challenge winners include the following solutions by young inventors:

- Designed by a six-year old to address her brother's sensory disorder, The Blanket Friend incorporates soft toys, rattle noises and in her words, "zippers, buttons, crinkly stuff and more.

- An Indiana-based 14-year-old created an economically feasible filtration system that can cheaply purify water anywhere in the world. Magic Sand, a Novel Graphene Oxide Based Water Filtration System uses Graphene oxide- coated sand, which is impermeable to dyes, metals and salt but still permeable to water.
- The Massage Rope is designed to help injured athletes stay in shape while recovering from leg injuries. Created by a New Jersey-based team of 10 and 11-year olds, the rope is made of recyclable braided plastic bags, and rotating wooden spools.

“The Smithsonian’s Lemelson Center believes that everyone is inventive—particularly kids,” said Tricia Edwards, Head of Education at the Lemelson Center. “The Invent It Challenge is a great opportunity for students to recognize their creative and problem-solving abilities.”

The Spark!Lab Invent It Challenge requires students to follow seven key steps in the invention process, including identifying a problem, conducting research, sketching their ideas, building a prototype, testing the product, refining it, and marketing it to potential users. The process helps to cultivate and reinforce 21st-century skills, including the use of digital technologies, and also meets several learning standards. A panel composed of Smithsonian and Cricket Media judges will select winners. The deadline for submitting inventions to the Spark!Lab Invent It Challenge is March 18, 2016. For complete entry guidelines and Official Rules, visit <http://challenges.epals.com/inventit2017>.

ABOUT CRICKET MEDIA

Cricket Media is an education media company that provides award-winning content on a safe and secure learning network for children, families, and teachers across the world. Cricket Media’s 11 popular media brands for toddlers to teens include Babybug, Ladybug, Cricket® and Cobblestone®. The Company’s innovative web-based K12 tools for school and home include the ePals community and virtual classroom for global collaboration as well as In2Books®, a Common Core eMentoring program that builds reading, writing and critical thinking skills. Cricket Media serves millions of teachers, students and parents in over 200 countries and territories through its platform and NeuPals, its joint venture with China’s leading IT services company Neusoft. Cricket Media also licenses its content and platform to top publishing and educational companies worldwide. For more information, please visit <http://www.cricketmedia.com>.

ABOUT SPARK!LAB

Spark!Lab is a hands-on invention activity space operated by the [Jerome and Dorothy Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation](#) at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. The Lemelson Center engages, educates, and empowers the public to participate in technological, economic, and social change. Through historical research, educational initiatives, exhibitions, and public programming the Center advances new perspectives on invention and innovation and fosters interactions between the public and inventors.

