

Motorola contest yields 'mood' phone

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Motorola's "MOTOFWRD" grand-prize winner from Duke University was awarded a \$10,000 scholarship and a new Bluetooth-enabled car.

Designed to improve social interactions, especially for tens of thousands of people who suffer from a mild form of autism called Asberger's Syndrome, student John Finan's "Mood Phone" would light up in a spectrum of color -- from warm reds to cool blues -- based on the verbal patterns of everyday speech received through a phone handset. Seen through the corner of the eye, the visual stimulus would help users interpret the mood and inflection communicated through the words and phrases they hear.

The biomedical engineering Ph.D. candidate's concept was judged to be best among the scores of ideas presented through Motorola's first-ever MOTOFWRD competition that asked college students to envision the future of seamless mobility. Concepts ranged from the fantastic to the practical: mobile technology that could access information, contacts, music and video with the blink of an eye, to location-aware cell phones that could lead to new friendships, inspire public debate or help identify and book a vacant parking spot in a crowded downtown.

"I entered this competition because I thought Motorola was asking the right question with their theme of seamless mobility," said Finan, a Dublin, Ireland, native. "A new toy can entertain for a time but a new tool that really makes you feel closer to home and freer to move can change behavior, and that is how a revolution begins."

"The Mood Phone is a truly inventive technology solution to a problem most of us wouldn't assume could be answered with a mobile device," said Padmasree Warrior, Motorola's chief technology officer. "If the technology becomes reality, it would make all of our lives easier. But the most important idea here is that these college students who entered the MOTOFWRD competition have truly impressed us with their level of innovation and creativity."

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