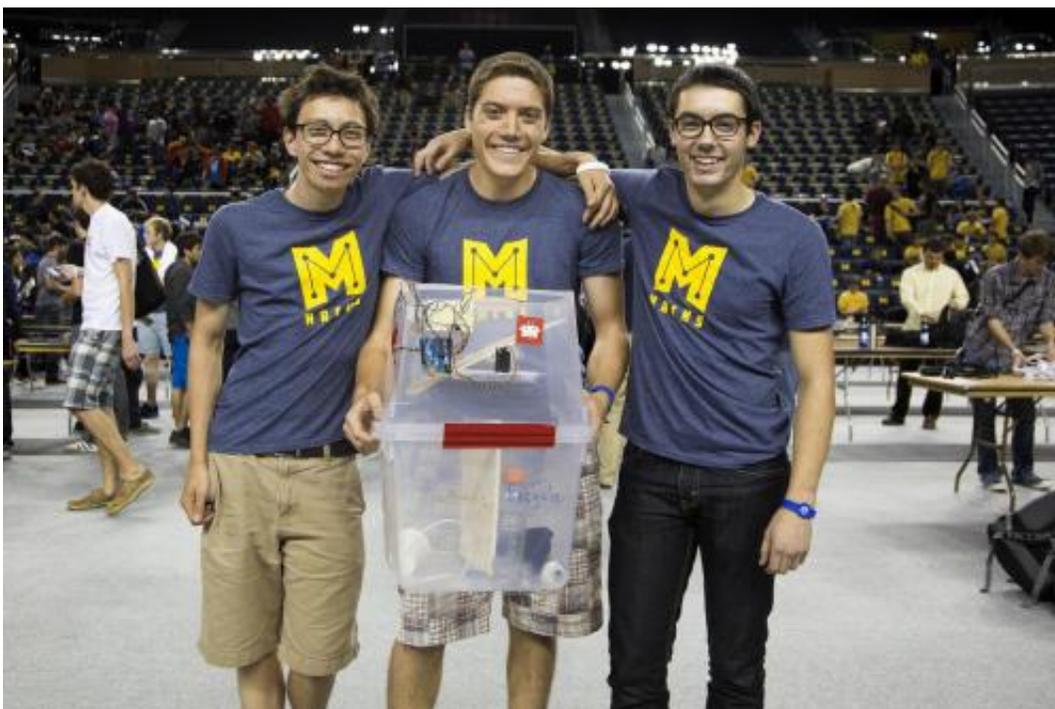


Smart recycle bin wins record-breaking MHacks hackathon

September 24 2013



Zachary Lawrence, Andres Toro, and Joshua Drubin; University of Maryland students and creators of the hack "GreenCan" pose for a celebratory picture after they are announced as winners of top prize for best hack at the closing ceremony of the MHacks Hackathon 2013 in the Crisler Arena on September 22, 2013 in Ann Arbor, MI. Credit: Joseph Xu, Michigan Engineering Communications & Marketing

An intelligent trash can that sorts recyclables from garbage won first prize at the University of Michigan's 36-hour maker blitz, MHacks.

With more than 1,214 people from roughly 100 schools, the event at Michigan stadium this weekend set what is believed to be a record for the world's largest hackathon organized by college students.

The team that made GreenCan came by bus from the University of Maryland. The students were one of the few groups to make a physical object, rather than an app or a web tool.

Bothered by seeing glass bottles and aluminum cans in the trash even when a [recycling bin](#) is close by, [classmates](#) Zachary Lawrence, Joshua Drubin and Andres Toro arrived at MHacks with an idea for a single-stream receptacle. The bin they built has a swing top that pivots in a different direction based on the sound an object makes when it hits it. Ping-y cans and bottles end up on one side of a partition and thud-y foam cups on the other, for example.

"I never dreamed of coming here and actually winning," Drubin said. "It feels unbelievable" – even on six hours sleep total for the past two nights. The GreenCan guys took a cat nap approach, slumbering for 30-minute stints every five hours.

"We're definitely going to feel it soon enough," Toro said Sunday afternoon.

GreenCan won \$6,000 and entry into Greylock Hackfest, a high-profile, competitive event organized by Silicon Valley [venture capital firm](#) Greylock Partners. Team tabbr from Carnegie Mellon University took the \$2,000 third place with a [web tool](#) that searches through open tabs open on a computer.

The \$3,000 second place prize went to Save My Glass, a "head-up" driving display for Google Glass devised by Mike Huang and Austin Feight, juniors in computer science and engineering at U-M. Save My

Glass would essentially project a car's dashboard information through the Google Glass so the driver wouldn't have to look down to see it. The tool could also use the Glass's blink sensor to determine if the driver had fallen asleep at the wheel, and if so, vibrate to wake the driver up. Finally, the tool could use the Glass's motion sensors to detect a crash and, if one occurred, dial 911.

Google was one of the event's many sponsors. Baris Yuksel, a senior software engineer there who came from New York to serve as a mentor, was inspired by the hackers' passion and energy.

"When I look here, I see the future," Yuksel told the crowd at the awards ceremony. "One of you is going to make the next big thing and the other will make the next, next big thing, and so on. In five years, 10 years you're going to be the tech kings. You're going to be awesome. You are awesome."

Yuksel also thanked the Michigan Engineering students who organized the hackathon, chartering buses to and from schools across the country and arranging for those beyond driving distance to get airline stipends in order to bring so many students together to create. MHacks organizers urged participants pay it forward, in a sense.

"This was one of the most incredible weekends of my life," Thomas Erdman, a junior in computer science and engineering at U-M who led the event, told the crowd at the awards ceremony. "I hope it was one of the most incredible weekends of yours.

"Go home and spread the culture at your schools," he said. "We saw so many problems solved in 36 hours! Imagine what we can do in a month, or a semester."

More information: www.mhacks.org/

Provided by University of Michigan

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