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College Students Compete to Develop Tech Solutions for Caregivers

Teams from Virginia Tech, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the College of William and Mary awarded prizes

Richmond, VA – Virginia Tech’s team took top honors in the **5th Annual Caring for the Caregiver Hack**, an event in which seven Virginia colleges and universities compete over a 25-hour span to create innovative tech tools for caregivers.

The Hack, organized by nonprofit VirginiaNavigator’s Lindsay Institute for Innovations in Caregiving, seeks to address the growing crisis of caregiver health. Right now, according to the AARP, 40 million Americans are providing unpaid care for aging or ill loved ones, dedicating an average of 20 hours per week to this work. As the population ages, the number of available caregivers will shrink; by 2030, there will be just four caregiving-aged adults (45-64) for every person aged 80 or older.

“Family caregiving is truly the backbone of long-term care, making up more than 80% of care provided,” said Dr. Richard W. Lindsay, co-founder of The Lindsay Institute for Innovations in Caregiving. “The creation of tech solutions is crucial to allow fewer caregivers to do more and to help care from a distance.”

Family caregivers often suffer emotional, physical and financial strain, said Adrienne M. Johnson, gerontologist and executive director of VirginiaNavigator. “While caring for a loved one can be gratifying, many caregivers find it immensely difficult to juggle work, family, self-care and caregiving responsibilities,” Johnson said.

The Hack took place November 2-3, 2019 at Troutman Sanders LLP in downtown Richmond. Interdisciplinary teams from the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, James Madison University, University of Lynchburg, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Tech worked with faculty coaches, family caregivers, and technology and business mentors as they developed

prototypes of their tools.

Virginia Tech's winning entry, **Omplace**, is an app designed to help a primary caregiver provide better care by connecting them with secondary caregivers. Omplace (pronounced ohm-place) enables users to coordinate care for a loved one by sending specific requests to a circle of contacts and transmitting details to a receipt-like printer in the care recipient's home. "The printout, the OmScript, was very unique, and made it possible for people who aren't accessing technology to at least see the printed version," said author and AARP caregiving expert Amy Goyer, who was one of the judges.

Second prize went to the Virginia Commonwealth University team for its app, **New Boots**, which seeks to guide people through the process of becoming caregivers for the first time. "We felt that that was a really unique niche," Goyer said.

The College of William and Mary's team took third place for **CollHome**, an online platform that organizes groups of college volunteers to install and service in-home technology solutions for caregivers. "We liked that it was intergenerational, that younger students would be having interactions with older adults," Goyer said.

Virginia Tech's winning team not only received a \$3,500 cash prize and an additional \$1,000 for each student from event sponsor Genworth, but also will have the opportunity (as will VCU's team) to develop their app further at Startup Virginia, a nonprofit business incubator in Richmond. Thanks to Alz You Need, the Virginia Tech and VCU teams also received invitations to participate in the Silver Moonshots Virtual Accelerator, a six-week startup boot camp.

The esteemed panel of judges selected the winners based on the technology's originality, usability, feasibility, and level of development. The judges were:

- Nick Bawa, CEO and Co-Founder, Covintus
- Marcia DuBois, Deputy Commissioner, Division for Community Living, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services
- Amy Goyer, Author and Family Caregiving Expert, AARP
- Deb Mitra, SVP — Business Strategy, Genworth
- Leda Rosenthal, Founder and CEO, Alz You Need
- Richard Wintsch, Executive Director, Startup Virginia

Additional technologies developed at the Hack event included:

- **Helpvault**, created by the George Mason University team, is an app and website that provides one-stop access to home care aides, volunteer help, self-care services, a care scheduling app, medical records and important documents.
- **Checkpoint Care**, created by James Madison University, aims to establish trust and accountability between primary caregivers and in-home aides by providing a shared calendar, daily checklist and care recipient profile.
- **Uplift**, developed by the University of Lynchburg team, seeks to promote caregivers' emotional and social wellness and connect them with a global caregiver community.
- **HAVEN** (Home Automated Video-Enabled Notifications), developed by the University of Virginia team, is a system that uses AI to analyze video footage in a care recipient's home and alerts a caregiver when an adverse event, such as a fall, is detected.

"What you are working on is mightily important," David O'Leary, President and CEO of Genworth's U.S. Life Insurance Division and a longtime caregiver himself, told the competing teams.

"With the Hackathon, we see imaginative ways to lighten the burden on caregivers," said AARP board member Robert Blancato.

AARP and Genworth supported the 2019 Caring for the Caregiver Hack as Presenting Sponsors. Platinum Sponsors were Troutman Sanders and the Virginia Center on Aging at VCU.

For more information on the Lindsay Institute for Innovations in Caregiving or this Hack event, please visit caregivinginnovations.org.

About The Lindsay Institute for Innovations in Caregiving: The Lindsay Institute for Innovations in Caregiving is an initiative of VirginiaNavigator, a statewide public/private partnership non-profit that helps Virginia's older adults, people with disabilities, veterans, caregivers, and families find vital information and community programs so they can live with independence, dignity and hope.

As the number of Virginians over 65 doubles by 2030 to 1.8 million, and with over 1 million caregivers across the state providing 88% of all eldercare, the Lindsay

Institute and its esteemed Advisory Council are working together to keep caregivers from neglecting their own health while they care for a loved one. For more information, please visit caregivinginnovations.org.

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