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John Ribeiro

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Microsoft's Imagine Cup spurs health applications

JOHN RIBEIRO, IDG NEWS SERVICE

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An application to help doctors diagnose anxiety disorders won this year's Imagine Cup, an annual contest sponsored by Microsoft that promotes innovation among technology students.

Giorgio Sardo, Massimo Paternoster, Silvia Perrone and Andrea Sossich from Team Even.ctor from the Polytechnic of Turin, Italy, won the software design category for their diagnosis application.

The theme of this year's contest, which attracted about 65,000 contestants from over 100 countries, was "imagine a world where technology enables us to live healthier lives."

"The Imagine Cup is about raising ideas, and also as demand for IT outstrips supply, we think that a contest like this would make IT exciting to students," said Sanjay Parthasarathy, corporate vice president of the Developer & Platform Evangelism Group at Microsoft, in a telephone interview Friday.

Microsoft, of Redmond, Washington, also announced that six finalists have been selected for training on technology and business, to turn their software into businesses, under its Imagine Cup Innovation Accelerator program co-sponsored with BT Group PLC.

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Microsoft said it selected Imagine Cup's winners after a week of competition. The finals were held in Delhi, India.

Winners were also announced in other categories such as algorithm design, IT systems, short film, interface design and a programming contest called Project Hoshimi.

The Imagine Cup finals in these six categories featured 181 students from 72 teams representing 42 countries.

The 42 software design finalist teams created applications around the Imagine Cup theme, using Microsoft technology and Microsoft .Net Web Services. Microsoft does not own the technology by the contestants for the Imagine Cup, Parthasarathy said. The contest did not require participants to develop around Microsoft's technologies, and some designs were around other technology and systems including the Symbian OS, he added.

Team Even.ctor's winning application helps doctors better diagnose and monitor people with disorders. The software uses a combination of video, audio, monitoring devices and GPS (Global Positioning System) to provide doctors with information, Parthasarathy said.

VEye (Virtual Eye), developed by Trivial Team from Brazil, is a hardware and software combination that helps the blind go about their daily lives. The system, which uses RFID (radio frequency identification), GPS, Bluetooth and other technologies, recognizes users' speech and gives them directions through vibrating wristbands until they reach their destination. The Trivial Team won second place in the design category.

Seoul will host next year's Imagine Cup. Previous finals for the Awards competition were held in Brazil and Portugal. "We chose India as the location for the finals this year because of the diverse problems, challenges and opportunities in the country," Parthasarathy said.



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