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Announcing the AT&T Rochester Civic App Challenge

Company partners with RIT, Digital Rochester, HTR and Hack Upstate to launch a contest for creating smartphone apps that will serve the community

The call is out and the challenge is on!

Technology giant AT&T, supported by Rochester Institute of Technology and assisted by Digital Rochester, High Tech Rochester and Hack Upstate, today launched the AT&T Rochester Civic App Challenge, a two-month "virtual hackathon" in which developers can leverage open data to build smartphone apps that serve community needs. Top winners will receive prizes totaling $18,000 in cash.

The challenge, which runs until April 23, was announced at RIT's MAGIC Center (Media, Arts, Games, Interaction and Creativity), which will serve as home base for the event. The AT&T Rochester Civic App Challenge kicks into full gear with a 24-hour organizing hackathon at the MAGIC Center, slated for 6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 21 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 22.

Participants can register or get more information on the AT&T Rochester App Challenge at http://attroc.hackupstate.com/. The challenge will be facilitated by Hack Upstate.

The goal of the challenge is to encourage local tech community to build and deliver apps and services that serve community needs, connect and engage citizens with their governments and demonstrate how mobile technologies can lead to the next generation of tech jobs and investment.

AT&T chose Rochester to kick-off a series of three high-profile Upstate New York mobile app challenges in recognition of the leading role the community has historically played as New York's innovation leader and center for technology jobs and commerce.

"AT&T's commitment to Rochester's tech sector grows out of our company's multibillion dollar nationwide investment in the mobile communications network of the future," said Marissa Shorenstein, New York president, AT&T. "By encouraging Rochester students and career technologists to explore smart phone software development we are spotlighting the enormous demand for developers and engineers needed to create the software that will drive our mobile economy."

"We applaud RIT's pioneering work in mobile technologies and we're grateful to President Destler and our local tech champions Digital Rochester, High Tech Rochester and Hack Upstate for partnering with AT&T on this important project," continued Shorenstein.

The challenge will award first, second and third prizes – as well as honorable mentions - in two categories: one for apps that are already under development and another for those created specifically for this contest. First place in each category comes with a $5,000 grand prize. Second-place winners will receive $2,000; third place $1,000 and honorable mentions $500 each.

To make the challenge truly Rochester-centric, teams submitting mobile apps must include at least one member that is either a current resident of the greater Rochester or attends one of the region's institutions of higher education.

Submitted apps will be judged on potential impact on Greater Rochester, execution and creativity or novelty. Among the judges will be local tech experts, community leaders and elected officials, including Assembly Majority Leader Joseph Morelle (D-Irondequoit) and State Sen. Patrick M. Gallivan (R-Henrietta).

"With the launch of this competition, we are challenging talented designers and developers to dream up and propose new media applications that can transform how government and civic organizations serve and interact with the community," Morelle said. "This competition will showcase the incredible talent and cutting edge technology that is being developed throughout the Rochester region. I commend AT&T, RIT and the many other partners involved for coming together to launch this exciting opportunity, and I look forward to the end results."

"The Greater Rochester region has been a national leader in high-tech innovation since George Eastman patented his first roll of film," Gallivan added. "Today that same spirit of entrepreneurship is being cultivated in the classrooms and laboratories of area universities such as RIT. I applaud RIT, AT&T and all those partnering to bring the AT&T Rochester Civic App Challenge to our community and look forward to the local tech-talent that will be showcased throughout the course of this event."

Winners of the AT&T Rochester App Challenge will be announced in May.

Leaders at RIT, Digital Rochester, High Tech Rochester and Hack Upstate expressed appreciation to AT&T for sponsoring the event and launching the first Upstate challenge in Rochester.

"Our organization knows first-hand the talent contained within the Greater Rochester area and the impact that mobile technology has on the advancement of our position as a top-tier technology region," said Digital Rochester Executive Director Lisa Doerner. "Digital Rochester is excited for the opportunity that the Civic App Challenge brings to the community."

"It's exciting to see the continued growth of the web and mobile sector here in the Rochester Region," said James Senall, High Tech Rochester president. "The AT&T Rochester Civic App Challenge is a tremendous new program that adds to our existing initiatives like startup weekends and lean launchpad accelerators. We are grateful to AT&T for their leadership, and excited to work with them and our community partners to take entrepreneurship and innovation to the next level."

"We are thrilled to have the opportunity to work alongside AT&T and an exceptional collection of community partners in RIT, Digital Rochester and High Tech Rochester," said Doug Crescenzi, co-founder of Syracuse-based Hack Upstate. "The Civic App Challenge is the sign of a vibrant community that is poised to cultivate and retain Upstate New York's premiere collection of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) talent."

RIT MAGIC Center Director Andrew Phelps thanked AT&T for its sponsorship, and said the challenge presents an exciting opportunity for the university's students and faculty, as well as the greater community.

"We are pleased to host this challenge, which will allow us to showcase the innovative spirit that infuses the MAGIC Center," Phelps said. "We created MAGIC to support turning ideas into marketable products. The apps that will be created during this challenge reflect well on our mission."

Interested persons can follow the challenge on Twitter using the hashtag #ATTROC.

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