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Startups focus on better aging

By Rebekah Alcalde

Can you imagine a pair of glasses that can brighten and enlarge whatever you happen to be reading or looking at, responding to your voice commands?

Or can you imagine a phone app that summons a trained driver in a wheelchair-accessible van to take you to a doctor's appointment?

Or can you visualize the difference it would make to an Alzheimer's patient if his caregivers had instant access to his life story, where they could learn about his favorite music, have access to family photos, and better understand what soothes him?

Well, imagine no more. All these innovations — and many others equally valuable — are actually here, thanks to the creativity and hard work of entrepreneurs focusing on the needs of older adults and those with disabilities.

Eight products and services, and their inventors, were in Washington's Chinatown last month, competing in the Aging 2.0 "pitch event" at the AARP Hatchery (its in-house idea-generating center).

The annual competition draws competitors from all over the world to major cities, where pitch events like this select the best candidates to move forward to the national round, which will be held this November in San Francisco.

From low-vision to super-vision

This year's top pick at the Washington event was a startup called NuEyes.

NuEyes was co-founded in 2016 by two natives of Fairfax County, Va. — veterans Mark Greget, who served in the U.S. Navy, and Justin Moore, who served in the U.S. Air Force. The technology of NuEyes was originally created for military use, and has since been utilized for augmented and virtual reality products.

The pair decided to license the technology from Osterhout Design Group (ODG) and put it to practical use helping those with vision problems.

"With all the augmented reality that is coming to the market, none of that was being leveraged to help with low vision," said Moore, president and COO. "We thought, 'Let's do something, like Google glass, but with a purpose.'"

The result — NuEyes ODG Smartglasses



Each year, the best new aging-focused entrepreneurs compete for honors at the Aging 2.0 Global Startup Search. Shown here are representatives of RoundTrip, a website and app that lets hospitals and individuals easily summon medical and non-medical transportation for medical appointments and the like. CIO Ankit Mathur (left), shown here with staffers Angela Damiano and Mark Switaj, was "thrilled" for his startup to be named fan-favorite in the first round of the competition. First place went to their competitor NuEyes, for smartglasses designed for those with low vision.

— resemble thick black sunglasses, and feature a set of lenses, a digital camera, a computer and a light.

The camera essentially live-streams what the wearer would see with regular vision, and then plays it back on the lenses with a brighter, sharper and larger image.

Wearers can control the zoom function on the glasses with a tiny remote or by using voice commands, such as "glasses make bigger" or "glasses make smaller."

The glasses also connect to an ear piece through which an electronic "voice" can read text into the wearer's ear. For entertainment, they have the ability to stream movies and TV shows. The device currently costs \$5,995, and comes with a two-year warranty.

Through a partnership with the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, veterans suffer-

ing from low vision can qualify for the glasses at no charge. The device is also available through the rehabilitation departments of many states, and through public schools and universities for qualified recipients with vision problems.

Moore brought to the pitch one of NuEyes' customers. Mark Garcia, who is in his mid-70s and is an Army veteran, is now legally blind. In testimony at the pitch event, Garcia said, "This technology has changed how I navigate my life."

"I used these to travel the world with my wife. To see the peaks and mountain ranges, and see facial details of new friends during dinner."

Moore says that he foresees many more

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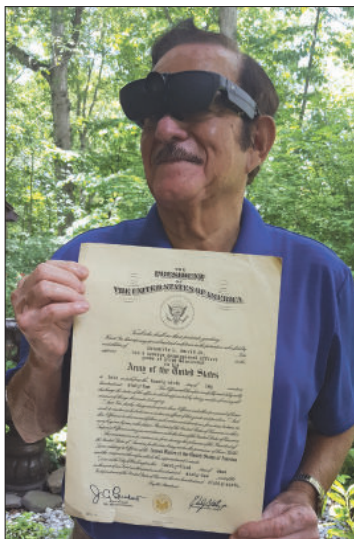
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NuEyes Smartglasses help Mark Garcia, legally blind, read and travel despite his vision problems.

Startups

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uses for NuEyes. For example, he says the technology can be easily adapted to assist doctors performing surgery and doing telemedicine. For more information about NuEyes and its smartglasses, visit <http://nueyes.com>.

Summoning transportation

RoundTrip, the startup selected “fan-favorite” at the D.C. pitch, offers an online system that connects patients with on-demand, non-emergency medical transportation. Examples include medically-accessible sedans, wheelchair-accessible vehicles and stretcher vehicles.

Though the company is based in Philadelphia, Pa., it operates across the U.S., including in the Washington metro area.

Part of the service is geared to health-care facilities. “Our Care Coordinator application allows hospitals and healthcare

facilities to order medical transportation for patients in less than 60 seconds and without ever having to pick up a phone,” said Ankit Mathur, CIO of RoundTrip.

The developers were inspired out of their frustration with the current system. “For years we’ve been witnessing issues with patients missing or [experiencing] delayed care due to transportation issues,” he said.

Then there’s also the matter of wasted resources. “Medical transportation companies average a 35 percent utilization rate. For every ten-hour shift that a medical vehicle is on the road, only 3.5 hours are spent transporting patients,” Mathur said.

Using RoundTrip’s DriverAPP, patients and healthcare workers can auto-dispatch the credentialed, trained and certified driver closest to them. The app also gives the driver applicable health information about the patient. Care coordinators can monitor the patients’ trip progress and location in real-time using the web portal.

RoundTrip offers curbside pickup for

non-medical transportation through its national partnership with the ridesharing service Lyft.

They also offer “an easy-to-use booking portal to schedule and monitor medical transportation for their patients,” Mathur added.

For more information, visit www.ridertrip.com.

Humanizing Alzheimer’s

Jay Newton-Small was frustrated after her father’s caregivers asked her to fill out a 20-point questionnaire about his Alzheimer’s and his life. The *TIME Magazine* correspondent instead wrote down his life story to give them a better picture of her father.

“They loved it. It improved his care — helping his nurses relate to him, and giving them tools with which to soothe and redirect him when he grew agitated,” she explained.

The positive experience inspired her to create MemoryWell, a network of over 300 journalists who prepare life stories of people with Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia, in order to help improve their quality of care.

“We began as a B2B, with our first clients in the D.C. area and Chicago,” Newton-Small said. “But after the Washington Post ran a story about us in December, we had thousands of families from all over the world contact us. We now offer stories to anyone who wants one online, in addition to working with [senior care] homes.”

The team has since developed a website that illustrates their clients’ lives. Their story anchors the main page, and family members can upload their loved one’s favorite music, photos, videos and readings for the page, which gives caregivers and others insight into their lives and how to engage them.

Newton-Small presented MemoryWell at the local pitch event and said she is eager to spread the word.

Among other services that pitched at the event: Aspire 211, a group that offers access to local resources concerning the problems of elder abuse; Concordia’s SentinelCare, which provides software, services and tools promoting aging in place; and itutela, LLC, a WhatsApp mobile application that provides critical healthcare communications.

Also present was Tech Star Tutors, a Richmond-based organization that hires local tech-savvy college students to provide personalized or group technology tutoring to adults over 50.

“Our local pitch event is always so inspiring,” said Brittany Weinberg, Ambassador for the Aging2.0 Washington, D.C. Chapter. “I admire these entrepreneurs who are tackling some of the biggest challenges and opportunities in the aging industry. They are mission-driven and want to improve the way we age as a society.”

NuEyes won both the D.C. and L.A. pitch contests, and is expected to do well in the next round of online voting, which closes Tuesday, Aug. 15. Winners will present at the Aging2.0 Optimize Conference, Nov. 14-15 in San Francisco, Calif.

To cast a vote for them or another semifinalist, visit <http://bit.ly/StartUpVoting> and click “Vote” at the top.

Did you know?

You may qualify for assistance in paying your home phone bill. Discounts for basic telephone service are available to eligible District of Columbia low-income residents.

Verizon Washington, D.C. Lifeline Plans:

Verizon Washington, D.C.’s Lifeline service, known as “Economy II,” offers reduced rates on Verizon’s monthly telephone bill and one-time discounts on the cost of installing phone service. Additionally, toll blocking is available to Economy II customers at no charge.

Economy II Service*: \$3.00 per month for unlimited local calling. Value-added services are not included (e.g., Call Waiting, Caller ID). No connection charges apply. Also, customers will not be charged for the federal subscriber line charge. Economy II customers who are 65 years of age or older can have this service at a further reduced rate of \$1.00 per month.

* Full terms and rates for these services, including terms of eligibility, are as set forth in federal and in Verizon’s tariffs on file with the Public Service Commission of the District of Columbia. All rates, terms and conditions included in this notice are subject to change and are current at the time of printing.

Eligibility:

District residents who have been certified by the Washington DC Lifeline Program as eligible may apply for the Economy II program. To apply, schedule an appointment with the Washington, DC Lifeline Program by calling 1-800-253-0846.

Households in which one or more individuals are receiving benefits from one of the following public assistance programs or have an annual income that is 135% or below the Federal Poverty Guideline may be eligible.

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP)
- Medicaid
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- Veteran’s Pension Benefit
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- Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8)

Restrictions:

- No other working telephone service at the same location
- No additional phone lines
- No Foreign Exchange or Foreign Zone service
- No bundles or packages
- No outstanding unpaid final bills
- Bill name must match eligible participant
- No separate Lifeline discount on cellular or wireless phone service
- Business lines are not eligible
- Phone number must match eligible participant
- Must be a current Verizon customer or establish new service with Verizon

Contact Washington, DC Lifeline Program at 1-800-253-0846 to apply

To find out more information, you may also call the Universal Service Administration Company (USAC), which administers Lifeline for the FCC, by calling (888) 641-8722 or by accessing its website at www.LifelineSupport.org.

Economy II is a Lifeline supported service. Lifeline is a government assistance program. Only eligible consumers may enroll. You may qualify for Lifeline service if you can show proof that you participate in certain government assistance programs or your annual income (gross and from all sources) is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guideline. If you qualify based on income, you will be required to provide income verification. Proof of participation in a government assistance program requires your current or prior year’s statement of benefits from a qualifying state or federal program; a notice letter or other official document indicating your participation in such a program; and/or another program participation document (for example, benefit card). Proof of income requires your prior year’s state or federal tax return; current income statement from an employer or paycheck stub; a statement of Social Security, Veterans Administration, retirement, pension, or Unemployment or Workmen’s Compensation benefits; a federal notice letter of participation in General Assistance; a divorce decree; a child support award; and/or another official document containing income information. At least three months of data is necessary when showing proof of income. In addition, the Lifeline program is limited to one discount per household, consisting of either wireline or wireless service. You are required to certify and agree that no other member of the household is receiving Lifeline service from Verizon or another communications provider. Verizon also provides Lifeline Service to residents of federally recognized lands who meet Native American Lifeline criteria. Lifeline service is a non-transferable benefit. Lifeline customers may not subscribe to certain other services, including other local telephone service. Consumers who willfully make false statements in order to obtain the Lifeline benefit can be punished by fine or imprisonment, or can be barred from the program.