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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

10th Annual SSMARt Innovation Awards Winners Announced

(Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario) – December 8, 2015: The 10th annual SSMARt Innovation Awards hosted by the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) took place November 27th with a gala luncheon at the Delta Waterfront Hotel and Conference Centre. Winners were announced across nine categories:

Innovation Company of the Year – Veracity Asset Management

Veracity Asset Management utilizes technology as the foundation of its cloud-based, collaborative ‘Community for Utilities’, providing a platform for utilities to manage mutual aid, critical spares and surplus assets. In 2014, Veracity entered the U.S. utility market; in the past 12 months their membership has grown to include over 1,000 utilities, represented by more than a dozen utility associations across nearly 20 states.

Innovation Educator of the Year – Miguel Garcia-Ruiz, Algoma University

Miguel Garcia- Ruiz employs low-cost and easy-to-use technology such as ‘electronic sensors’ in all classes, allowing users to connect everyday objects to computer programs. To enhance students’ learning experience, Miguel has developed a new course on human-computer interaction where students will develop significant skills such as creativity, thinking out of the box and interface design for digital products.

Innovation Leader of the Year – Jeff Cardoso, 8:56 Ltd.

With over five years of experience in project management and the ability to speak 27 different computer codes, Jeff Cardoso has been fundamental in helping grow 8:56, overseeing company initiatives and processes, managing the company’s application development department and international business development. Jeff offers in-depth web and app development services and is a trusted source for web site software and programming information within the region.

Innovation Project of the Year – Animating the John Rowswell Hub Trail (Jude Ortiz)

Animating the John Rowswell Hub Trail brought together intersecting histories, along with a diverse cultural and ecological approach to help show all the wealth the community has to offer to people living here, and tourists visiting the community. The information is now available through mobile devices and a trilingual printed guide and audio tour.

Innovation Researcher of the Year – Chunhua Zhang, Algoma University

Chunhua has performed research in the emerging field of geospatial research and precision agriculture and has published 3 recent papers in this area. Additional research in the areas of remote sensing of mangroves and karst environments has yielded 11 publications in the past 3 years. Chunhua joined Algoma University in 2012 and plans to collaborate with fellow AU researchers on a project to apply aerial images to monitor ranch conditions.

Innovation in Social Entrepreneurship – Gore St. Café

Gore St. Café is more than just a café; the owners/operators offer their space for artists to showcase their talents. Gore St. Café has developed a Supper Club, offering fresh produce to customers to buy during a market that they host. They are innovating social entrepreneurship in the community by offering pay-what-you-want and bartering options for patrons to pay for their meals. The operation doesn't have a regular, permanent menu; instead they use social media to keep their customers aware of the available meal options as they change.

Innovation Student/Graduate of the Year – Mandy Ehnes

From July 2014-2015 Mandy worked as an NOHFC intern at Algoma University, and set-up and ran a bioacoustic migration monitoring system with 24 microphones located from Thunder Bay to Point Pelee. She engaged volunteers to run each station; student volunteers scanned recordings and analyzed the data. As an undergraduate, Mandy compared the efficacy of two recording technologies for identifying individual birds of a single species. The research being completed solves ecological monitoring problems and tests new ways to apply bioacoustic tools to answer ecological or behavioural questions.

Innovation in Web and Social Media – Miramar Design Studio Inc.

Wacky Wings required a robust and comprehensive suite of web based applications to address the needs of two local restaurants along with the growing number of other locations in Ontario. Miramar designed, developed and deployed completely customized solutions including: public web site, mobile version, content management system, secure manager resource library, on-line air hockey game, VIP club registration, promotion/coupon campaign system, analytics and on-line ordering.

Innovation Youth of the Year – Jordan Winter

After her family acquired honey bees, Jordan set about the task of researching tried and true over wintering techniques of hives in Northern Ontario. This grade 11 Korah student's aim is to determine the best strategies to ensure the survivability for the over wintering of honey bees in Northern Ontario. She developed a survey to determine hive orientation, hive ventilation, feeding over the winter months, insulation materials, location to major crops and several other variables.

An overview of the winners will be showcased in a video to be posted at a later date.

The event provided an opportunity to highlight innovation in the science and technology sectors within the Algoma region. SSMIC recognized special guest Mr. Steve Butland, who was

an integral part in founding the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, by naming the Educator of the Year award in his honor. Councillor Butland addressed the audience and spoke to the formative days of starting the Innovation Centre, the changes in technology and the economy since that time and the development of SSMIC over the years. Councillor Butland stated that, “SSMIC is recognized as a model for other communities to follow, and has been acknowledged as a leader in North America for the work that they do.”

Congratulations to the winners and to those who were nominated! Thanks to this year’s event sponsors Porter, Village Media, Algoma University, OLG, PUC and Compass Imaging Group.

SSMIC welcomes area businesses, entrepreneurs, educators, and students to put forth nominations to help recognize innovation in the Algoma district. Next year’s SSMARt Awards will take place on Wednesday November 2, 2016. Stay tuned for event information.

For more information on the SSMARt Innovation Awards contact Patti McGonigal at 705 942-7927 ext. 3179 or pmcgonigal@ssmic.com. Stay up to date on SSMIC news and events on Twitter @SSMICnews and on Facebook at Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC).

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About the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre

The Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre (SSMIC) is a non-profit organization established in 1999 to function as a catalyst for economic development and diversification in the information technology and science knowledge-based sectors. SSMIC’s mission is to drive business growth, facilitate research and commercialize innovation in globally significant areas of science and technology through partnerships, expert advice, community development, business incubation, youth outreach and sector development activities. Key SSMIC business divisions include the Community Geomatics Centre, Rural Agri-Innovation Network, Algoma Games for Health, Business Support Services and Smart Energy.