

INVENTION

Device wins first in convention

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Through both Perrin's hands-off style of mentorship and frequent collaboration with Aiden, the students created a two-way device that uses Bluetooth technology to send and deliver preprogrammed messages between Aiden and his teacher, who would operate a corresponding device.

The students call the device C.H.A.T., which stands for Communication Help with Assisted Technology. C.H.A.T., the students said, is designed so that Aiden can use the array of eight corresponding buttons to communicate common needs, such as "I need a break" or "I want to show you something" and to express answers in the affirmative and negative, for example. The teacher, likewise, has their own preset messages, including "I'll be there in a minute," "Breathe and trust yourself," and "Do you want it explained a different way?" among others.

When Aiden presses a button on his device, a light shows up on the corresponding device to let the teacher know a message has been received.

Each button on the device has a corresponding icon that makes it easier to interpret, not only helping Aiden communicate his



Gorge MakerSpace founder Jack Perrin, at left, poses for a group photo with Project Invent Demo Day winners Madison Swanson, Dylan Durand, Wyatt Sheaves, CC Ahrens, Cin Ahrens, and Henry Kirkwood. In the middle are Aiden Dennis and his mother, Jessica. Also pictured on Page 1 is Aiden, holding the prototype casing which will fit C.H.A.T. Jacob Bertram photos

needs to his teacher, but also allowing him to participate in classroom discussions without having to vocalize his thoughts.

At the beginning stages, the students had brainstormed more than 50 different messages to include on the device, and with the help of Aiden, his mother Jessica, his teacher, his therapist, and other students who struggle with speech impairments, they whittled down the preset messages to just eight for Aiden to send, and six

options for the teacher to return.

"The hope will be to streamline communication," CC said in a group interview between *Columbia Gorge News* and the students Thursday at Daubenspeck Park in Bingen.

The students worked together through "lots of Jamboards," an online collaboration tool that allowed the group to work together in remote settings. The students coded and built circuit boards, and with the help of

Aiden, also created a casing for the device in prototype that matches the shape of Aiden's favorite rock, which "aims to be calming and discreet," the students told the panelists.

The students said in their presentation that about two children in 1,000 have CAS, and that the device is designed to be compatible for students with selective mutism and other speech disorders. They told the panelists that after Demo Day, they hope to proceed with

more extensive user testing.

Dylan told *Columbia Gorge News* that one thing she learned through the process of invention is that "there are solutions to all sorts of problems you've never even thought of before."

Presenting the group with their first-place award, panelist Sarah Gurman, who works as a product design lead at Dropbox, told the group who made C.H.A.T. that they were taking home the grand prize due to their use of user testing and feedback to narrow

down their range of messages that capture a wide range of meaning. They also received praise based on their use of iconography to enhance the device's usability as well as their product design, which emphasized discreetness.

"You really found a way to use technology to foster human connection, which ... at the end of the day is maybe one of the most impactful things inventors can do," Gurman told the group.

CODES

Appealed to LUBA

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more than 100 comments from the public, both written and in-person. I personally read every one of them and weighed the pros and the cons of these decisions," McBride wrote in response to a request for comments on the appeal.

In a press release sent last week to *Columbia Gorge News*, along with a copy of the intent to appeal, Towey said the city council did not provide enough information to the community in advance about changes to its standards. As a result, many people misunderstood the city's plans to encourage housing that is affordable for the middle class.

"People deserve a chance to be more informed," Towey said. Towey is lead petitioner in the appeal, along with Kim Kean, Denise McCravey, John McGrory and Jeanie Senior.

In testimony at the March 8 public hearing and in letters sent afterward, Towey and others mentioned inadequate notice, prompting the city to extend the public hearing to March 15. Oregon State law requires that notice of a regular meeting be reasonably calculated to give 24-hours notice of the meeting to any

interested person and the media. The March 8 public hearing was part of the city's regular meeting.

The City of Hood River's Middle Housing revisions to its zoning and building codes became final May 12. Once LUBA agrees to hear the appeal, a decision can take several months, and in the meantime the appeal would not stop any construction allowed under the city's revisions, according to LUBA. If LUBA agrees to hear the appeal, the city will have a chance to respond. After hearing arguments, LUBA has a range of options, from dismissing the appeal, to affirming it.

"It appears that the appellant will argue a procedural misstep. If that turns out to be accurate, then we will learn from it, address it, and keep moving forward. Regardless, I remain committed to building a community where everyone has a safe and stable place to call home," McBride said.

McGrory wrote that the notice of the public hearing was insufficient because the revisions impact more property owners than those who got notice.

"Under Oregon statutes, for changes this sweeping to property rights, the notice should be delivered by mail to all property owners," he said, citing similar zoning changes now under consideration in The Dalles, for which

letters went out to all city property owners. The Dalles is also publishing information on the city's website and on social media.

Hood River's revised codes reflect its efforts to provide more efficient use of urban residential land including; in this case, the development of housing types affordable to the middle class. The revisions change building codes to provide opportunities for building smaller dwelling units within existing neighborhoods, and for infill development. Not everyone agreed on what was ideal, McBride said.

"Some residents argued that allowing more smaller homes on every lot would change the character of our community. And they might be right — things may look different as we accommodate more people in our community. Others argued that we should do everything we can to encourage housing of all types and sizes throughout our community. There are trade-offs to every policy decision," McBride said.

However, most people misunderstand the code's intent, according to Towey.

"There's a real need in Hood River for more information on the new zoning code," Towey said. "People believe, for instance, that it is focused on affordable housing, but that's not where it's headed."

Brown gets pushback on vaccination cards

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

Gov. Kate Brown is getting blowback from political opponents who are leveraging the actions of her allies in an attempt to derail a new state policy requiring Oregon residents to show proof of vaccination at some venues and businesses with more relaxed COVID-19 rules.

Brown had announced the new policy earlier this month as a new way to

build confidence in when and where someone might be exposed to COVID-19, which has killed over 591,000 Americans since last year.

"This disease remains dangerous for those in communities with high rates of unvaccinated individuals," Brown said. "That's why I'm encouraging all Oregonians to roll up your sleeves, take your shot, and get a chance to change your life."

While Brown has framed the issue as one of public

health, opponents say it's about privacy and personal choice.

The 23-member House Republican Caucus wrote to Brown on Thursday calling on her to reverse plans for what they called a "vaccination passport" — a term popular among conservatives to describe the COVID-19 inoculation certificates approved by the Centers for Disease Control.

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