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DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS NAMES ‘REMIND ME’ APP WINNER OF THE 2013 FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT HACKATHON

Remind Me’s Features will Help New Yorkers Manage their Money and Connect them to the City’s Financial Empowerment Centers

Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz today announced Remind Me as the winner of DCA’s first hackathon, where 25 participants created apps this past weekend at the DUMBO Loft. [Remind Me](#) automatically calls Financial Empowerment Center clients to remind them of their appointment and gives them the option to reschedule or cancel and get information like directions and what to bring. The app will be used by DCA to help New Yorkers manage their money and support the work of the Financial Empowerment Centers. Andrew Jiang, Xinzha Liang and Rachel Tsao received the \$1,000 winning prize and Alexandros Hatzakis and Noel Hidalgo, who created [MoneyHack Map](#) and Jeffrey Novich, who created [Pay Yourself First](#) won second place and received \$500 each. The Financial Empowerment Hackathon was generously supported by Capital One and the Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund. Judges for the event included representatives from Capital One, Google.org, ideas42, LearnVest and DCA.

“The City’s Financial Empowerment Centers have done remarkable work to help New Yorkers improve their credit score, reduce debt and increase savings. With everyone using cell phones to manage our daily lives, DCA was looking for an app that could support the work of the Centers,” said DCA Commissioner Mintz. “Participants worked all weekend and had some great, innovative ideas about digital tools to help New Yorkers manage their money and get out of debt. Judges found the winning app to be an easy way to automatically remind clients of upcoming appointments, saving counselor time and ultimately helping clients to achieve their financial goals. We’ll announce the launch of a new tool that includes this functionality in the coming months.”

“Using mobile technology and creative solutions, the developers behind the winning apps of the Financial Empowerment Hackathon have thought strategically and creatively about how best to approach the challenges facing consumers today,” said Rachel Haot, Chief Digital Officer. “Their apps, which do everything from send automatic phone messages about appointments with financial counselors to quickly pinpointing the nearest Financial Empowerment Center, will help consumers become smarter managers of their money. Once again, New York City’s local technology community has proved an effective partner in serving New Yorkers through technology, and we appreciate these innovative contributions.”

“Investing in innovation and technology can help communities address some of their most important social and economic issues,” said Daniel Delehanty, Senior Director of Community Development Banking, Capital One Bank. “The Financial Empowerment Hackathon is a creative way to bring together the brightest minds in technology design, government and business to focus on the issue of financial empowerment by developing tools that will help lower-income New Yorkers achieve their financial goals and complement the success of the City’s Office of Financial Empowerment. The creativity and innovation shown by the participants was outstanding and offered real time solutions to help reach more New Yorkers with financial empowerment services. We know that when our community members learn how to make, spend and save money responsibly, the larger community and economy benefit.”

During the Hackathon weekend, participants worked in teams and individually to develop working prototypes of apps that can financially empower New Yorkers by keeping track of appointments and necessary financial documents, locating a Financial Empowerment Centers and other resources and encouraging and tracking savings. Judging was based on the apps’ functionality, user-friendliness, and ability to support the work of the Financial Empowerment Centers.

DCA’s Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) was launched by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg at the end of 2006 as the first local government initiative in the country with the specific mission to educate, empower, and protect individuals and families with low incomes. A hallmark program of OFE is the City’s Financial Empowerment Centers, which offer free, one-on-one professional financial counseling. Since the pilot opened in 2008, the program has grown to nearly 30 Centers and the financial counselors have helped more than 20,000 New Yorkers reduce their debt by almost \$10 million. The financial counselors help New Yorkers deal with debt collectors, understand their credit reports, create budgets, improve their credit scores, open bank accounts, and start saving for emergencies and for the future. The Financial Empowerment Center initiative is also being replicated in five cities (Denver, CO; Lansing, MI; Nashville, TN; Philadelphia, PA; and San Antonio, TX) through a \$16.2 million, three-year pilot funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies through the CFE Fund. The app will be available to clients in these new cities as well.

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Empowering consumers and businesses to ensure a fair and vibrant marketplace, DCA licenses more than 78,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. The DCA Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) was launched by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg at the end of 2006 as the first local government initiative in the country with the specific mission to educate, empower, and protect individuals and families with low incomes. OFE creates innovative programs, products, and services for New Yorkers so they can build assets and make the most of their financial resources. Our goal is to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education and counseling; connect individuals to safe and affordable mainstream banking and products and services; improve access to income-boosting tax credits, savings, and other asset building opportunities; and enforce and improve consumer financial protections to safeguard financial stability. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at nyc.gov/consumers.

The Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund supports municipal efforts to improve the financial stability of households by leveraging opportunities unique to local government. By translating cutting edge experience with large scale programs, research, and policy in cities of all sizes, the CFE Fund assists mayors and other local leaders to identify, develop, fund, implement, and research pilots and programs that help families build assets and make the most of their financial resources. For more information, please visit ccefund.org.

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