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Ideas to solve littering at NEA hackathon

About 150 participants presented 18 ideas to solve littering problems, reduce waste and encourage recycling at National Environment Agency's fourth hackathon event.

By Monica Kotwani, Channel NewsAsia
POSTED: 21 Jun 2015 22:13   **UPDATED:** 21 Jun 2015 22:39

VIDEOS   PHOTOS

Green Sense team members pose for a photo with NEA CEO Ronnie Tay (L) after receiving their first prize of S$2,000. (Photo: National Environment Agency's Facebook page)

CAPTION

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SINGAPORE: Reducing waste, encouraging recycling and solving the problem of littering at leisure and sporting events were issues participants at this year's "Clean and Green" hackathon, organised by the National Environment Agency (NEA), had to come up solutions for.

After two days of deliberating and prototype development, a variety of ideas emerged.

An app that allows users to upload a picture of an item to find out if it can be recycled, and litter bins that reward people for disposing their trash were some of the 18 ideas generated at NEA's fourth hackathon event, which saw about 150 people take part.

A group called Green Sense on Sunday (Jun 21) took home the first prize of S$2,000 cash. The group came up with a mobile messaging platform that uses location-based technology at sporting or leisure events.

The platform will inform spectators of the nearest trash bins based on their location. Spectators can use the app to inform organisers when the bins are full.

"People are good by nature - they just don't end up recycling or put their trash in the wrong place because they are in a new environment or because they are really focused on enjoying - whether at a conference or festival," said group member Mr Herve Le Gouguec, a
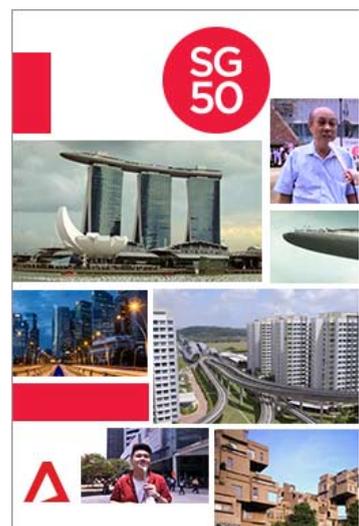
business analyst.

"Our app aims to gently remind them. It's based on nudging - which is a social behaviour science. So we hope to achieve this by sending text messages to people at regular intervals or if they are in specific areas.

"For example, if I move to an area where they serve food and I have the app open, I will get a text message to enjoy the food and please remember to put the litter in the right bin.

It can scale to different types of events and locations. It's also a way for event organisers to have a friendly touch. If you show up at a stadium, nobody really says 'hey, welcome' or 'thank you', 'goodbye', or 'be a good citizen'. That's also a way for the platform to be leveraged."

"Green Sense had a really simple but readily executable solution to dealing with litter at big events - so I think that was something the judges liked a lot about that," said Mr Adam Lyle, executive chairman of Padang & Co. and co-partner of the NEA Clean and Green Hackathon.

"For the second one - 'QBM'- it was a fun and simple way to educate people about what can be recycled - it was both its simplicity and also its fun nature. And the third prize - 'Trashy People' - which is a kind of funny name - it had a refreshing to the cradle-to-grave approach to recycling. They all came from different angles - those three - but they each expressed good insights into how to make Singapore cleaner and greener."

"These are challenges and issues all of us in Singapore face," said Mr Ronnie Tay, CEO of NEA. "Having such events allow us to reach out and tap the wisdom of the crowd. We can't possibly think of all the solutions and in fact you do need to have the ideas and the views and perspectives of the people involved.

"Having ideas from the people of different ages, lifestyles, professions and occupations is useful. And because they also know what their friends and relatives like - what their habits are."

NEA says it found a number of ideas from the hackathon useful. It has implemented ideas from previous such events.

- CNA/ec

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