

Microsoft Unveils New Imagine Cup Competitions With a Focus on Women
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U.N. Women and Seattle Storm have partnered with Microsoft to offer opportunities that inspire young developers and address women's issues.

REDMOND, Wash., Feb. 20, 2013 /PRNewswire/ -- Today, Microsoft Corp. announced two new competitions that focus on women and female technology innovators at [Microsoft Imagine Cup](#), the company's global student technology competition.

(Logo: <http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20000822/MSFTLOGO>)

The [Women's Empowerment Award](#) was established in partnership with [UN Women](#), the U.N. organization working to accelerate gender equality and the empowerment of women, and will be awarded to two student teams of any gender that create projects that best address issues impacting women globally. Registration also is now open for the [Women's Athletics App Challenge](#), in partnership with the [Seattle Storm](#) women's basketball team, which inspires female developers, innovators and entrepreneurs to create software related to sports, health or fitness.

Teams of any gender from around the world that advance to the Imagine Cup 2013 Worldwide Finals will be eligible to enter their projects into consideration for the Women's Empowerment Award. The first-place prize (US\$12,000) and the second-place prize (US\$8,000) will be awarded to the projects that best address economic inequality, access to technology and other resources, gender-based violence, leadership and political participation, or other critical women's issues. Applicants will be judged on the potential impact their projects can have on the lives of women, including feasibility to address the target issue and the quality of the application.

"Students can be change agents; they can revolutionize the world we live in," said Kristin Hetle, director of Strategic Partnerships of UN Women. "By harnessing the power of technology, they can bring attention to issues that women, in particular, face every day. The Women's Empowerment Award will encourage and reward students who choose to focus their energy on creating positive change for women globally."

The Women's Athletics App Challenge is open for submissions from all-female teams worldwide that want to compete to code the best sports, fitness and athletics apps for an opportunity to have a private meet-and-greet with a Seattle Storm basketball player and watch a game on the Storm's home court in Seattle. The winning team, announced this summer, will also receive a US\$1,000 prize per team member.

"The Storm and Microsoft look forward to seeing the types of apps women around the world — from Canada to Kazakhstan — will build to promote healthier lifestyles, give consumers more incentive to stay active, or help people realize exercise and sports can be a great way to have fun and stay in shape at the same time," said Karen Bryant, president and CEO, Seattle Storm.

Female participation in the Imagine Cup continues to grow steadily. Last year, nearly 20 percent of students at the Worldwide Finals were female. One of Imagine Cup's goals is to help participants build developer skill sets, learn how to launch startup businesses, and enhance their prototypes based on the advice of mentors and judges. Imagine Cup gives women an important platform to pursue interests and careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics)-related fields and serves as a launch pad for them to becoming developers, innovators or entrepreneurs.

For example, during Imagine Cup 2012, one all-female team from Oman created a mobile application that monitors blood bank levels and sends alerts to eligible donors via SMS when there are shortages. "Participating in Imagine Cup offered us the chance to meet other student developers and build new skills," said Omaima Al Muraikhi from Team Grawesome, recounting her experience participating in the event. "Because of the opportunities that came through Imagine Cup, we're now entrepreneurs working hard to create our own technology startup business, based in the Middle East."

It's not only all-female teams making an impact on women's lives. The recent winner of a [Microsoft Imagine Cup Grant](#) of \$50,000 from Uganda was an all-male team that created a mobile application to aid health workers as they assist expectant mothers. The algorithm analyzes fetal heart sounds to determine the fetal

heart rate and the position and age of the fetus, and it securely stores the results in the cloud, ultimately improving women's maternal health.

About UN Women

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. www.unwomen.org

About The Seattle Storm

The 2010 WNBA champion Seattle Storm is one of six independently owned teams in the WNBA, the world's preeminent women's professional basketball league. Established in 2000, the Storm is committed to bringing outstanding professional basketball to a diverse and rapidly growing fan base. The team aims to serve as a powerful community advocate with a focus on literacy, health and fitness and support for women and girls and youth basketball. Recognized as one of the WNBA's most active teams in the community, the Storm is committed to serving others through partnerships and the team's community initiatives. More information is available at StormBasketball.com.

About Microsoft Imagine Cup

This is the 11th year of Imagine Cup, part of Microsoft YouthSpark, which will be celebrated at the Worldwide Finals in St. Petersburg, Russia, July 8–11. Students ages 16 and older are eligible to register and compete in Imagine Cup by visiting <http://www.imaginecup.com>. A full list of competition categories is available at <http://imaginecup.com/main/compete>.

About Microsoft YouthSpark

Microsoft YouthSpark is a global initiative that aims to create opportunities for 300 million youth in more than 100 countries during the next three years. This companywide initiative includes Citizenship and other company programs — both new and enhanced — that empower youth to imagine and realize their full potential by connecting them with greater opportunities for education, employment and entrepreneurship. Find out more at <http://www.microsoft.com/youthspark>.

About Microsoft

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

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