

Brainstorming for health-care solutions

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Innovative ideas for improving health care crossed a North American border and the Atlantic Ocean to be bandied about at the second annual Hacking Health Windsor-Detroit event.

More than 200 Canadian and U.S. professionals in health care and information technology gathered at the Toldo Health Education Centre on the campus of the University of Windsor this past weekend to brainstorm solutions to front line health-care problems.

A team of ambitious young entrepreneurs from Sheffield, England joined the process courtesy of Skype technology and a webcam.

Helping pitch their idea on this side of the pond was Connor Paterson from the University's World Health Innovation Network and Taylor LaPorte, program and events manager with the University's EPICentre incubator.

"The whole event focuses on cross-border initiatives so why not cross the ocean," said Paterson.

In just its second year, Hacking Health Windsor-Detroit has "created a lot of buzz" according to organizer Irek Kusmierczyk.

That's caught the attention of others like the Sheffield group which was looking to better coordinate food distribution to the homeless in England but also curious about potential Canadian and U.S. markets for their futuristic app.

Kusmierczyk, a director with WE-tech Alliance, said representatives from Hacking Healthcare chapters in Hamilton, Waterloo, London and Quebec City also came into town to see how Windsor-Detroit does it.

"It's become a magnet for at-



Tina Nguyen, centre, takes part in Hacking Health Windsor-Detroit at the University of Windsor on Saturday. More than 200 health-care and IT professionals participated in the brainstorming session. *DAX MELMER*

tracting talent," noted Paul Riser, Kusmierczyk's Michigan counterpart from TechTown Detroit.

Anne Girard and Tracey Roberts came from the John McGivney Children's Centre looking for technical help to develop a more detailed accessibility app for their families.

The rehabilitation centre has a great working partnership with university students in human kinetics but this weekend they forged another with the computer science program.

Girard and Roberts pitched their idea Friday night and then spent Saturday and Sunday working with university staff and students as well as visiting business

analyst Alejandro Gaviria who drove 13 hours from Quebec City to take part in the event.

"We want an app that's different from what's out there," Roberts said.

"We want to build in a user profile that indicates what the specific needs are, something much more comprehensive than the other apps out there."

Gaviria was brainstorming ways to commercialize their idea as well as gather information for hosting an inaugural Hacking Health session in Quebec City this fall.

All teams presented their concepts for scrutiny Sunday with \$30,000 in prizes up for grabs.

One Detroit law firm offered up

\$10,000 in legal services and the Detroit Chamber of Commerce awarded entrance to the powerful Mackinaw Policy Conference along with mentorship coaching.

WE-tech put together a \$5,000 prize package that included free work space inside its Downtown Accelerator and mentoring.

Last year's event saw a Michigan nurse develop a company offering on-demand home health care.

On this side of the border, Kaitlyn Sheehan, a registered nurse at Windsor Regional, developed a smartphone app that stored emergency health care information for cardiac patients.

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