

# 13th Chicago Innovation Awards honor the old and the new

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**A** 97-year-old company known for little red wagons and a two-year-old company partly owned by billionaire investor Mark Cuban were among the winners at the 13th annual Chicago Innovation Awards at Harris Theater on Thursday night.

More than 1,500 people attended the event, which aims to bolster Chicago's business startup and innovation communities. Tom Kuczmariski, who co-founded the awards with former Chicago business journalist Dan Miller, said the gathering represents a coming together of new small companies and more established businesses.

"I'm so proud that Chicago has been able to create a culture where both entrepreneurs and large companies can try new things," he said.

The ceremonies carried a "Star Wars" theme that saw Kuczmariski and Miller take the stage as Chewbacca and C-3PO, key characters from the film. R2-D2 accompanied them, providing beepy fun and turning to watch every video presentation.

**Radio Flyer** was among 10 Chicago Innovation Award winners for its Ziggle Ride-On kids' product. **Packback** was among 10 winners in the up-and-comer category for its electronic textbook rentals. Packback appeared in March on ABC TV's "Shark Tank" and came away with a \$250,000 investment for a 20 percent equity stake from Cuban.

**Caremerge**, maker of a suite of mobile and Web solutions to help manage senior care, won the Social Innovator Award.

Collaboration awards went to **Beltone**, for work with Apple on a hearing aid that receives wireless audio streaming from an iPhone or iPad, and **Molex**, for work with Dow Chemical on a solar-powered roofing shingle.

A panel of 13 judges selected the winners, after narrowing them to 100 finalists from 552 nominees.

A People's Choice Award went to **Alligatortek**, for a produce-donor portal that helps Feeding America speed up collection of highly perishable produce donations. More than 30,000 people cast ballots online for the award, said Chicago Innovation Awards executive director Luke Tanen, who shared emcee duties with Kuczmariski and Miller.

**Sam Yagan**, CEO of Match Group, owner of Match.com, and co-founder of OKCupid, won the Visionary Award. Yagan, in accepting the award, said it isn't always grand visions that matter.

"There's a vision that can't help but notice small problems in the world," he said. "I'm a small 'v' visionary."

The Seeing Things Differently Award went to performance painter **David Garibaldi**, who in the spirit of the "Star Wars" theme painted a portrait of Darth Vader — with a clever and surprising twist. And the **Joffrey Ballet** dance company won The Spirit of Innovation Award and gave an inspiring performance.

## OTHER CHICAGO INNOVATION AWARD WINNERS

- **AuctionsByCellular**, for a mobile bidding technology that increases charity auction bids for fundraisers.
- **LMK Technologies**, for the T-liner, which rehabilitates leaking underground pipes in sewers.
- **Dough**, for its visual platform that aims to make do-it-yourself trading less intimidating and more fun.
- **Horizon Pharma**, for Duexis, a pill that aims to treat arthritis while reducing gastro-intestinal side effects.
- **Mattersight**, for its Predictive Behavioral Routing system that matches callers with call agents suited for them.
- **Rise Interactive**, for its Interactive Investment Management, which uses data to drive marketing strategy decisions in real time.
- **Keeper Security**, for its secure digital vault that manages passwords.
- **Swingbyte**, for its digital swing analyzer that transmits golf-swing data to a user's smart phone.
- **Strata Decision Technology**, for StrataJazz, a cost-reduction tool for hospitals.

#### **OTHER UP-AND-COMER WINNERS**

- **TempoIQ**, for its real-time sensor analytic platform for Internet of Things applications.
- **Options Away**, a new way for consumers to look at airline tickets.
- **LuminAid**, an inflatable, solar-powered lantern designed for disaster-relief applications.
- **640 Labs**, an aggregator and analyzer of agricultural data.
- **Shiftgig**, a marketplace platform that connects service industry workers with shift jobs.
- **Rippleshot**, a financial data security provider.
- **Pangea**, a money transfer service.
- **Kentech**, for eKnowID, a personal background checking technology.
- **ThinkCerca**, an education technology that focuses on individual learning ability.

Blue Sky Innovation was among the media sponsors of the event.

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