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Innovation Challenge = Budding Green Entrepreneurs – Rain Barrel Sized Disaster Relief Housing & More

Posted on Wednesday, July 18, 2012 By [Maryruth Belsey Priebe](#)

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The University of Washington (UW) 2012 [Environmental Innovation Challenge](#) recently concluded, with some truly inspiring innovations coming from the [green entrepreneur](#) winners. From highway jersey barriers made from recycled tires to post-disaster relief transitional housing that comes in a rain barrel, the students of UW didn't disappoint! Check out the projects that received top billing from both UW

engineering students and business teams.

GIST - Concrete Highway Jersey Barriers

Dubbed the Green Innovative Safety Technologies (GIST) project, this green start-up has developed an alternative to concrete highway jersey barriers. Made from recycled tires, the

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GIST concept is to remove old tires from landfills and put them to good use by turning them into barriers instead. Designed by three UW engineering students and a Foster School of Business MBA student, GIST is supposed to improve the safety and eco-friendliness of highways.



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“Last year alone in this country there were 300,000,000 used automotive tires thrown away with no good secondary purpose. That’s where we come in. The GIST solution uses proprietary, rubber-recycling technology,” says MBA student Ricky Holm. “We have designed a recycled alternative to concrete lane separation devices. Not only is our product environmentally friendly, it is more aesthetically pleasing, safer for vehicle occupants and it increases the safety of people living near highways.”

The team won the \$10,000 grand prize for this green entrepreneurial idea.

Barrels of Hope - Post-Disaster Relief Transitional Housing



One of the most immediate needs in post-





disaster regions is quick and easy housing for displaced residents. Barrels of Hope is looking to address this need with their sturdy, durable, sustainable housing solution that ships in a rain barrel!

The kits include the materials a family would need to build their own earth-bag home. This is done by filling polypropylene sandbags with soil and crushed concrete

from ruined buildings, which are then used as bricks. The barrel is also hooked up to the house after it is complete to collect rainwater.

Each kit contains enough bags and other materials to build a 10 x 10 structure, including 500 polypropylene bags, 2 rolls of barbed-wire, strapping to hurricane proof the roof and fittings to attach the rain barrel to the gutter system. The barrels also ship with a Team Leader to manage the build and train people on how to use the materials to build their own homes.

“We’ve developed a safe, affordable, environmentally friendly house that can fit inside of a small rain barrel. Organizations such as USAID, American Red Cross, World Vision International and Habitat for Humanity raised nearly \$4.5 billion for the relief efforts to Haiti after the earthquake struck in 2010. Unfortunately, there were no truly transitional and scalable shelter solutions at the time. Stuck with the next best option, nearly half of the 200,000 families who lost their homes in the earthquake are still living in the tents that they received nearly two years ago. Our houses are earthquake and hurricane-resistant. With disasters continuing to occur... it’s time that we change the way that we approach post-disaster response,” says Ryan Scott, MBA student.

The team won the \$5,000 second prize for their green entrepreneurial invention.



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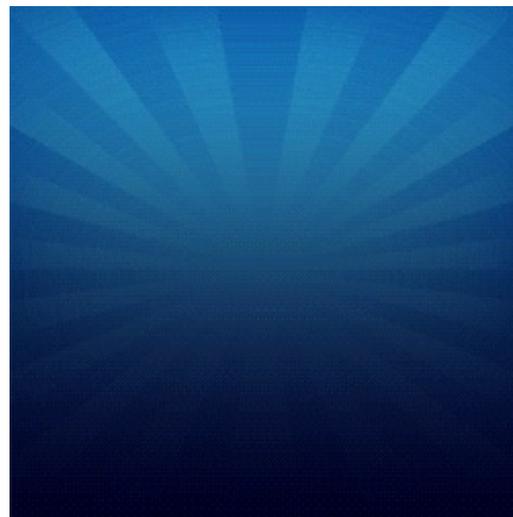
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This post was written by:



Maryruth Belsey Priebe

Maryruth has been seeking the keys to environmental justice - both at home and at work - for over a decade. Growing up adjacent to wild spaces, Maryruth developed a healthy respect (and whimsical appreciation) for things non-human, but her practical mind constantly draws her down to earth to ponder tangible solutions to complex eco-problems.

With interests that range from green living to green business, sustainable building designs to organic gardening practices, ecosystem restoration to environmental health, Maryruth has been exploring and writing about earth-matters for most of her life. Of special interest is the subject of ecopsychology and the role the natural world plays in the long-term health and well-being of humanity. You can learn more about Maryruth's work at www.JadeCreative.ca.



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