

## Seventh-graders create iPhone app

**TECH MATTERS | 'Since fifth grade, we've had this idea of becoming successful'**

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Sam Kaplan and Louie Harboe's company, Tapware, is one of the more promising technology startups in Chicago.

Based in Hyde Park with guidance and a bit of seed funding from one of the University of Chicago's top business school professors, Tapware recently released its first iPhone application called "The Mathmaster" and has a second app in the works. With as much institutional knowledge of the iPhone development platform as arguably anyone on the planet, Kaplan and Harboe seek to profit from an industry that has spawned more than 1 billion downloads of commercial applications within its first year of existence.

For the two seventh-graders at the University of Chicago Laboratory School, Tapware has significantly more upside than opening up a lemonade stand.

"Since the fifth grade, we've had this idea of working together and becoming successful with our Web site ideas," said Harboe, also a professional designer who publishes his portfolio of images and icons at [www.graphicpeel.com](http://www.graphicpeel.com). "We've thought of a lot of strange and different ideas."

The Mathmaster is pretty straightforward. For 99 cents per download, the application is marketed to parents as a fun tool to get their children more enthusiastic about things like square roots and multiplication tables. The application took about a month to develop and then a week to get approved by Apple's App Store. The two hope to launch a second, quirkier advertising-based application around their site [siphthat.drink.com](http://siphthat.drink.com) in the coming months.

"Our goal was to get approved by the app store, sell a bunch of copies and make more apps," said Kaplan, who in recent years completed an advanced placement computer science course and served as a keynote speaker at the National American Council for Online Learning.

The playing field for developing iPhone apps and other emerging new media technologies is not only being leveled, but completely inverted. Tinkering around in the space requires curiosity, free time, and a fresh point of view unfettered by traditional media systems. Who better to exploit this realm than a pair of smart, pre-adolescent entrepreneurs blessed with resources and encouraging parents?

Harboe's father is an architect, and Louie developed his own design aesthetic playing around on old Macintosh computers. Kaplan's father, Steven, is a renowned professor of finance and entrepreneurship at the U. of C.'s Booth School of Business. While Steven may turn to his son for technical help connecting multiple lines on a conference call, the Morningstar director and serial startup adviser can certainly help the young lads with their revenue model.

"They've been working on the technology for years," Kaplan said. "But on the business side, I can teach them a few things."

## **Funding Future Founders**

More than \$10,000 in cash and prizes was awarded to four high school entrepreneurs May 6 during the 4th Annual Citywide Business Plan Competition & Luncheon. The competition, which included opening remarks from Mayor Daley, showcased business plans from students representing ACE Technical Charter High School, Gwendolyn Brooks Academy, Chicago Vocational Career Academy and Global Visions Academy.

Throughout the year, local entrepreneurs and executives through the Future Founders program mentored the students. Administered by the Chicagoland Entrepreneurial Center with an assist from the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship, Future Founders is planting the seeds of new business generation in neighborhoods historically overlooked by the business community. While most of the young companies that presented were not tech-based, the students' use of multimedia in their presentations compares favorably to presenters at more established venture capital competitions.

More information about the program can be found at [www.futurefounders.com](http://www.futurefounders.com).

## **The nanotech revolution**

Congressman Dan Lipinski (D-3rd) believes advances in nanotechnology will drive the next industrial revolution.

"I have drunk the Kool-Aid," he said, adding that "it is critical for the Chicago area to be at the forefront." Lipinski, who chairs the U.S. House Science and Technology Committee's Subcommittee on Research and Science Education, last month addressed local science and economic development leaders at the NanoNow Forum. He has cited Northwestern University, Romeoville-based Advanced Life Sciences and Northstar Aerospace on the southwest side as local institutions advancing the nanotech cause.

In the nanotech industry, every little bit forward makes a difference.

Brad Spirrison is a Chicago free-lance writer.