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For Immediate Release

**CHAIRMAN WHEELER HONORS INNOVATORS IN
ACCESSIBILITY COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

WASHINGTON, June 13, 2016 – FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler today announced winners of the fifth annual Awards for Advancement in Accessibility (“Chairman’s AAA”). These awards recognize and honor innovative achievements in communications technology that benefit people with disabilities.

“We can use today’s technologies to address so many of the communications barriers facing Americans with disabilities,” said Chairman Wheeler. “These innovative efforts help us move forward as a nation toward more accessible technologies. Thank you and congratulations to these innovative leaders.”

The Chairman’s AAA celebrates outstanding private and public sector ventures in communications technology accessibility and innovation. The awards are part of the Commission’s goal to facilitate ongoing exchanges among industry, assistive technology companies, app developers, government representatives and consumers to share best practices and solutions for accessible communications technologies.

Six winners and three honorable mentions were chosen, with awards to be presented at a ceremony later today at the M-Enabling Summit at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Va. The award-winning technology will be displayed at a reception immediately following the ceremony.

Winners of 2016 Chairman’s AAA

Winner: SOS QR – Emergency Support App for People with Cognitive Disabilities

Description: SOS QR is an emergency record and alert notification app for people with cognitive disabilities. With one touch, the app allows the user to transmit an SOS to a pre-populated list of emergency contacts, who, in turn, receive a call, message, and map with the user’s current location. The app also populates the phone’s lock screen with a two-dimensional barcode or “QR” code. When the code is scanned by first responders or anyone else during an emergency, it will provide vital information about the user and simultaneously notify emergency contacts.

Winner: UnusTactus – App Simplifies Smartphones for People with Cognitive Disabilities

Description: Unus Tactus is an app for people with cognitive disabilities meant to simplify access to smartphones. It allows for a one-touch photo dialer, a call for help

button and “geofence” alerts. Geofence alerts can notify a list of contacts if the device leaves a given area. All of these features would be useful for support networks of people with cognitive disabilities who are prone to wandering.

Winner: Wearable Sign Language Recognition System Prototype Interprets Motions and Displays Text

Description: This research project at Texas A&M resulted in a prototype wearable device that recognizes lexical items in American Sign Language by using a combination of surface electromyography and inertial sensors. Surface electromyography can detect fine muscle activity of the hand and arm, while the wrist-worn inertial sensor captures palm orientation and hand/arm movements. Currently the prototype device can be linked to a monitor to display the text being signed. Using two distinct but complementary sensing technologies provides greater accuracy and ability to distinguish between otherwise similar signs.

Winner: Disney’s Movies Anywhere App - Syncs Audio Description with Film Action

Description: Disney’s Movies Anywhere App for iOS devices now includes an audio description (also called “video description”) sync function that allows the user to independently access audio description for a movie already in progress. In the app, users have access to a list of Disney films with audio description. While watching one of the films in that list, the user can prompt the app to “listen” to the movie and sync the corresponding audio description track on the device.

Winner: Sesame Enable - Users Can Engage Smartphone Controls with Head Gestures

Description: Sesame Enable is a project that provides smartphones with modified Android OS installations for users who do not have the capability to control the input functions on a smartphone with their hands. With Sesame Enable, a user can control the device using head gestures and voice prompts to navigate menus with an on screen cursor, rather than tapping and swiping.

Winner: eSight Eyewear – Headset with Videocam to Help People with Low Vision

Description: eSight Eyewear is a wearable technology solution for people with low vision. The device consists of a headset with a forward facing camera, LED screens in front of the user’s eyes and a processing unit. The user can adjust aspects of the video feed – such as contrast, zoom and color – to maximize their residual vision.

Honorable Mention: Convo Announce - Allows Video and Text through PA System Announcements

Description: This video-based public address system allows administrators at schools for the deaf or other institutions that use sign language to broadcast a live video announcement, using both text and audio, across any and all videophone terminals in the building. The system was initially developed to improve accessible communication during emergencies, but can be used for making announcements anytime.

Honorable Mention: KNFB Reader - App Reads Documents Using Smartphone Camera

Description: This app from Kurzweil and the National Federation of the Blind brings screen reader functionality to paper documents using a smartphone camera and Optical Character Recognition technology to read aloud print documents and signage that would otherwise be inaccessible.

Honorable Mention: Holy Braille Project - Researches Solutions for Low-Cost Braille

Display Tablets

Description: This project from the University of Michigan is working to prototype low cost Braille tablets that function using hydraulics rather than electronics to drastically reduce cost. The miniature electronics in a traditional Braille display are very expensive to manufacture and necessarily limit the number of Braille cells on a display. Replacing these circuits with hydraulic pressure actuated pins can allow for more flexibility in displays – for example, full page Braille tablets – while reducing prices.

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