

For Immediate Release

## **MED-EL USA Announces Winners of Global Ideas4Ears Competition**

*Two families awarded trip to MED-EL's international headquarters in Austria to meet world-renowned inventors*



**December 12, 2017 - (DURHAM, NC)** – MED-EL USA announced today the United States winners of the global Ideas4Ears children's invention contest. Parker Welsh of Ozawkie, KS, was awarded the grand prize of \$1,000 college scholarship and a trip for two to MED-EL's international headquarters in Innsbruck, Austria. Avery Bennett of Chicago, IL, was awarded a finalist prize of a trip for two to MED-EL's international headquarters.

"We were inspired by the creativity of all of the entries," said Raymond Gamble, President and CEO, MED-EL North America. "MED-EL is a company born of pioneering inventors. Our passion and commitment to improving the lives of people who live with hearing loss is as strong today as it was when the founders implanted the world's first multichannel cochlear implant in 1977."

Parker entered the international Ideas4Ears competition for a very special reason: his mom, Tracey, and brother, Carter, are profoundly deaf. Both Tracey and Carter are recipients of the MED-EL cochlear implant technology that has helped connect them to the world of sound. Parker's Grand Prize winning entry involves inserting regenerative cells from salamanders into human macrophages – cells that are responsible for tissue repair and regeneration. If placed near damaged cochlear hair cells, Parker reasons that this can cure his mother's and brother's hearing loss.

Avery also had a special reason for entering the competition. His sister, Raquel, is profoundly deaf and is also a recipient of the MED-EL cochlear implant technology. Avery's winning entry, a Cochlear Implant Battery Extension, helps address the power draw that the external processor uses while reducing its size behind the ear.

Local winners were selected from seven countries, including USA, Austria, Brazil, Germany, Italy, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. More than 240 entries were received from children around the world. The competition challenged children to create a piece of artwork showcasing their invention to improve the quality of life of people living with hearing loss. While celebrating children's creativity, Ideas4Ears aimed to improve children's understanding of the challenges associated with hearing loss and deafness as well as the benefits of treatment.

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During the trip to MED-EL's headquarters, planned for April 2018, Parker and Avery will have the opportunity to exchange ideas with Ideas4Ears winners from around the world, discover how MED-EL's life-changing devices are made and learn about the cutting-edge research being undertaken by the company. They will explore the science of hearing loss through a tour of the company's science center and meet with MED-EL's many inventors to learn about the stages of bringing an idea to fruition.

The Welsh and Bennett families will be capturing and sharing their journey on social media using the hashtag #ideas4ears.

### About MED-EL

MED-EL Medical Electronics, a leader in implantable hearing solutions, is driven by a mission to overcome hearing loss as a barrier to communication. The Austrian-based, family-owned business was co-founded by industry pioneers Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair, whose ground-breaking research led to the development of the world's first micro-electronic multi-channel cochlear implant (CI), which was successfully implanted in 1977 and was the basis for what is known as the modern CI today. This laid the foundation for the successful growth of the company in 1990, when they hired their first employees. To date, MED-EL has grown to more than 1,800 employees and 30 subsidiaries worldwide.

The company offers the widest range of implantable and non-implantable solutions to treat all degrees of hearing loss, enabling people in 117 countries enjoy the gift of hearing with the help of a MED-EL device. MED-EL's hearing solutions include cochlear and middle ear implant systems, a combined Electric Acoustic Stimulation hearing implant system, as well as bone conduction devices. [www.medel.com](http://www.medel.com)

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