

For Immediate Release

MED-EL launches Ideas 4 Ears children's competition to discover the next generation of inventors of hearing technology

Global competition launched to raise awareness of hearing loss and technology



May 1, 2017 – (DURHAM, NC) – MED-EL USA, a leading provider and inventor of hearing implant systems, today announced a search for future inventions through a global children's competition, Ideas 4 Ears ([www.Ideas4Ears.com](http://www.Ideas4Ears.com)).

The competition, which kicks off a celebration of May's Better Hearing and Speech month, invites children aged 6-11 years old from the United States to create a piece of artwork showcasing their invention to improve the quality of life of people living with hearing loss. The competition celebrates children's creativity and aims to improve understanding of the challenges associated with hearing loss and deafness as well as the benefits of treatment.

"From day one, innovation has been, and remains a key focus in our drive to overcome hearing loss as a barrier to communication," said Geoffrey Ball, Chief Technical Officer at MED-EL and inventor of the SOUNDBRIDGE middle ear implant. "Born from inventors ourselves, the MED-EL story is proof of the power of a good idea and the impact that inventions can have on the lives of people living with hearing loss. The MED-EL Ideas 4 Ears competition will hopefully inspire young people and educate them about hearing loss in our community."

One U.S. winner will be awarded \$1,000 deposit into a college savings plan of their choice and entry into an international competition for a grand prize of a trip for the winner and an adult chaperone to MED-EL's global headquarters in Innsbruck, Austria. While there, they will tour the research and development factory and have the opportunity to meet with MED-EL's many inventors, including the company's co-founders Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair. The global winner will be announced on Inventors' Day, November 9, 2017, at a ceremony at MED-EL's Austrian headquarters.

The panel of MED-EL judges for Ideas 4 Ears are looking for creative, one-of-a-kind inventions which could have the potential to help improve the lives of people with hearing loss at any age. Children can express their ideas through a painting, collage or video.

"Hearing loss can have profound effects not only on communication, but also health, independence, well-being and daily function," said Raymond Gamble, President and CEO, MED-EL North America. "Recognizing the importance of treatment and the high unmet need around the world, we hope this

competition will encourage hearing loss to be regarded not as an individual problem, but one which must be addressed at multiple levels within the community. We're excited to see what the children create and wish them the best of luck!"

Children and their parents are encouraged to share their inventions and progress on social media using the hashtag #ideas4ears.

Parents and children interested in learning more about the competition and how to enter should visit [www.Ideas4Ears.com](http://www.Ideas4Ears.com). Entries must be received by Sunday, September 3, 2017.

#### About hearing loss

About 20 percent of Americans, or 48 million people, report some degree of hearing loss. By age 65, one out of three people lives with hearing loss. The World Health Organization recommends a range of interventions to improve communication once hearing loss has occurred, including hearing implants.<sup>2</sup>

#### About MED-EL

Austria-based MED-EL Medical Electronics is a leading provider of hearing implant systems with 29 subsidiaries worldwide. The family-owned business is one of the pioneers in the industry. The two Austrian scientists Ingeborg and Erwin Hochmair developed the world's first microelectronic-multichannel cochlear implant, now considered the modern cochlear implant, which was implanted in 1977. The cochlear implant was and remains the first replacement of a human sense, the sense of hearing. In 1990 the Hochmairs laid the foundation for the successful growth of the company when they hired their first employees. To date, the company has grown to more than 1,700 employees around the world.

MED-EL offers the widest range of implantable solutions worldwide to treat various degrees of hearing loss: cochlear and middle ear implant systems, and EAS (combined Electric Acoustic Stimulation) hearing implant system. In July 2016, MED-EL acquired the technology for a novel non-surgical bone conduction system from the Swedish medical device company Otorix, further expanding the number of people who can benefit from innovative hearing technology and reinforcing MED-EL's mission to overcome hearing loss as a barrier to communication. People in over 100 countries enjoy the gift of hearing with the help of a product from MED-EL.

[www.medel.com](http://www.medel.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Hearing Loss Association of America. Basic Facts About Hearing Loss – Statistics. <http://www.hearingloss.org/content/basic-facts-about-hearing-loss>. Accessed April 2017.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization. Deafness and hearing loss factsheet. Available at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/>. Last accessed November 2016.