



## Windsor teen wins Ontario Science Centre's 2015 Weston Youth Innovation Award

### *Alex Deans impresses jury with novel navigation device for the visually impaired*

Toronto (May 27, 2015) – At just 18 years old, Alex Deans is already making his mark in the world, adding “award-winning scientist” to his résumé. The Ontario Science Centre will present the 2015 Weston Youth Innovation Award to the 18-year-old from Windsor, Ont. for applying science in a creative way to make a positive difference in the world. Creator of the iAid, a navigation device for the visually impaired, Deans hopes his novel invention will help the visually-impaired gain greater independence by allowing them to navigate obstacles using ultrasonic sensors and smartphone technology.

“The best part of science is using it to make other people’s lives better,” said Alex Deans, 2015 Weston Youth Innovation Award recipient. “It’s an honour to have my efforts recognized by the Ontario Science Centre. This award will allow me to further develop the iAid and ensure it’s available to those who would most benefit from it.”

Deans’ inspiration came at 12 years old when he noticed a visually-impaired woman struggling to cross the street. Science-obsessed since the third grade, his natural next step was to go home and invent a tool that would help visually-impaired people get around unassisted, giving them greater independence. The result: the iAid, a set-up of four ultrasonic sensors mounted to a belt that scans the space around a visually-impaired person for potential obstacles both indoors and outdoors. Originally a hand-held device, Deans has now seamlessly integrated iAid with a smartphone.

“The entire jury was impressed by Alex’s creativity, motivation and dedication to finessing his design over a four-year period,” said Dr. Hooley McLaughlin, Vice-President Science Experience and Chief Science Officer, Ontario Science Centre. “We look forward to seeing future inventions from this outstanding young innovator.”

Established in 2008, the Weston Youth Innovation Award encourages and recognizes young Canadian innovators. It was named in recognition of The W. Garfield Weston Foundation’s \$15-million lead gift to the Ontario Science Centre’s Agents of Change initiative and to honour The Foundation’s support and commitment to education. Deans’ project was selected for the award by a panel of judges, comprising Dr. Barbara Sherwood Lollar, Professor, University of Toronto; Dr. Marc Nantel, Associate Vice President Research & Innovation, Niagara College; Joe Deklic, Vice President Deal Management at Rogers Communications; Dr. Imogen Coe, Dean of Science, Ryerson University; Eugenia Duodu, Ph.D. Candidate Chemistry, University of Toronto and Executive Director, Visions of Science Network for Learning; and Dr. Hooley McLaughlin, Vice President Science Experience and Chief Science Officer, Ontario Science Centre.

“Our family is proud to celebrate inspirational and outstanding youth like Alex Deans who tackle real-world problems with ingenuity through the Weston Youth Innovation Award,” said W. Galen Weston, Chairman and President, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation. “The calibre of submissions

received continues to be impressive. We are so pleased to support young innovators like Alex, who are sure to make their mark in Canada and beyond.”

Deans will be awarded the \$2,000 prize at the Ontario Science Centre on June 2, 2015. In addition, he will work with a multimedia team at the Science Centre to create an animation to showcase his project, which will be displayed in the Weston Family Innovation Centre and shared via the Science Centre’s social media channels. More information about Deans’ award-winning project can be found at [www.OntarioScienceCentre.ca/InnovationAward](http://www.OntarioScienceCentre.ca/InnovationAward).

The Ontario Science Centre has welcomed more than 49 million visitors since it opened in 1969, implementing an interactive approach adopted by science centres around the world. Today, the Science Centre is a leader in free-choice science learning and a key player in Ontario’s innovation ecosystem, offering lifelong learning through hands-on, engaging experiences. It is a prime venue for public dialogue about science, technology and society. The Ontario Science Centre is an agency of the Government of Ontario funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. As a publicly assisted organization, the Science Centre relies on generous individuals, corporations and foundations who share a commitment to science and education for additional operating support. For more information about the Ontario Science Centre, please visit [www.OntarioScienceCentre.ca](http://www.OntarioScienceCentre.ca).

The W. Garfield Weston Foundation is a private Canadian family foundation, established in the 1950’s by Willard Garfield Weston, his wife Reta and their children. In 1924 Garfield inherited his father’s company and during his life established baking and retail businesses throughout Canada and in many parts of the world. The founders believed that as the funds are generated through the hard work and success of these Canadian companies, grants should be given in Canada for the benefit of Canadians. For three generations, The W. Garfield Weston Foundation has maintained a family tradition of supporting charitable organizations across Canada. Today the Foundation directs the majority of its funds to projects in the fields of land conservation, education, and scientific research in Canada’s North. In addition, it provides funds to further Canada’s research in neuroscience.

To arrange for an interview with Alex Deans or Dr. Hooley McLaughlin, please contact Andrea Mus (416-696-3191 / [andrea.mus@osc.on.ca](mailto:andrea.mus@osc.on.ca)).

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### **Media contacts**

Anna Relyea  
Director, Strategic Communications  
416-696-3273 | c: 416-668-1967  
[Anna.Relyea@osc.on.ca](mailto:Anna.Relyea@osc.on.ca)

Jefferson Darrell  
Media Relations Officer  
416-696-3154  
[Jefferson.Darrell@osc.on.ca](mailto:Jefferson.Darrell@osc.on.ca)

Andrea Mus  
Media Relations Officer  
416-696-3191 | c: 416-895-5482  
[Andrea.Mus@osc.on.ca](mailto:Andrea.Mus@osc.on.ca)

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