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## Contest Winners Create Social Benefits Using Low-Cost Drones

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The Drone User Group Network (DUGN), NEXA Capital Partners, and the UAS America Fund have announced the winners of the Drone Social Innovation Award, a cash prize for the most socially beneficial, documented use of a low cost drone. Through this initiative, the DUGN hopes to spur innovation, investment, and attention for the positive role that civilian drone technology can play in society. With NEXA Capital's and the UAS Fund's support, the grand prize is worth \$10,000. "When Timothy approached us, we saw this award as an opportunity to help demonstrate the socially meaningful applications of unmanned aerial systems. We see that there is a growing grassroots social movement that wants to play a part in the development of this technology, and we want to support that," stated Michael Dymant, NEXA Capital Partners Founder and Managing Partner.

Two winners were selected, CATUAV from Barcelona, Spain and Linking the World from Dallas, TX, and will split the \$10,000 award for their socially beneficial and innovative applications of drones. Applicants were evaluated based on criteria that covered the depth and type of benefit the use of drones could bring to communities to quantify the social impact. The award also required that the total cost of the drone be less than \$3,000, with a preference for higher ratio of social benefits to cost of equipment.

CATUAV is a private company dedicated to Earth observation using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). Their content submission was for their use of drones to detect landmines. "There are over 70 countries that have landmines buried in their soil with new victims from these weapons every year. Current methods of detection are slow and dangerous so we developed a method to detect mines from the air that doesn't put people at risk." noted Marc Beltram of CATUAV.

Linking the World is an international humanitarian aid organization with a focus on children, global awareness, and breaking cycle of poverty around the world. "Our work has focused on using UAVs to provide NGOs and first responders with imagery for immediate situational awareness in disaster response settings such as after Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. We decided to participate in this competition to share the work we were doing with a wider audience. The prize money will help us update our equipment for the upcoming storm season, and to expand the countries we are able to support." said Charles Devaney, Director of the Global UAV Program and Project Halo at Linking the World.

The Drone Social Innovation Award initiative was originally formed to spur innovation, investment, and attention for the positive role that civilian drone technology can play in society. Submissions covered a broad range of social applications of drones, with the other four finalists including projects relating to marine mammal research, crowd size estimation, environmental conservation, and development of social and visual thinking skills for children with autism. Matthew Bieschke, President of the UAS America Fund, added "Although our fund is targeting long-term investment in major commercialized UAS opportunities and the provision of a nationwide supporting infrastructure, encouraging and incubating the development of UAV applications is critical to the success of the market in the U.S. We are delighted to be helping to encourage the next generation of socially beneficial applications of unmanned systems, and all the entries solidify the reality that there are incredible social benefits of these technologies that can be had with low-cost solutions."

"People are throwing out a lot of ideas in terms of what could be done," says Drone User Group Network Founder Timothy Reuter. "The challenging part is actually following through and doing it. ... We wanted to encourage people and community groups to find partners and innovate on the applications side."

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The winners were recognized at the Drone User Group Networking Conference held in Dallas, TX on September 15th. The conference, the first national level Drone User Group conference, explores the role of drones and the multitude of challenges and opportunities facing the quickly growing industry.

The collection of entries received for the award support a growing acceptance of the use of drone technology for the benefit of individuals and community groups to make the world a better place. Beyond the historical use of drones by government or large corporations, drones are gaining accessibility and benefits are being seen for new applications of the technology.

**The Drone User Group Network** is an association of community organizations dedicated to teaching people how to build and operate their own drones and that seeks to promote the use of civilian drone technology for the benefit of humanity. More information about the network and prize can be found at [dugn.org/prizes](http://dugn.org/prizes).

**NEXA Capital Partners** provides advisory and banking services to companies in the aerospace and infrastructure sector and makes strategic investments in high growth opportunities in these sectors. More information about NEXA can be found at [www.nexacapital.com](http://www.nexacapital.com).

**UAS America Fund** was established to provide of \$2.2 billion in financing to benefit the emerging commercial UAS sector of the U.S. aerospace industry. By investing in UAS control and communications systems, as well as UAV development and integration efforts nationwide, UAS Fund plans to unlock the full benefits of UAS commercialization, economic development and job creation in the United States of America. More information about the UAS Fund can be found at [www.uasamericafund.com](http://www.uasamericafund.com).

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