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American Student Assistance Awards Prizes Totaling \$250,000 to Social Entrepreneurs, Tyto Online and 'Every Kid Gets a Robot'

Prizes distributed at MIT Solve's Solve Challenge Finals Event

BOSTON -- September 28, 2021 -- American Student Assistance (ASA), a national nonprofit that helps to foster students' understanding of postsecondary education and career pathways, today announced two organizations as the winners of the ASA Prize for Equitable Classrooms Challenge and Indigenous Communities in this year's [MIT Solve 2021 Global competition](#). MIT Solve is an initiative of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a mission to solve world challenges.

ASA awarded monetary prizes to two different Solver teams for digital solutions tailored to U.S.-based primary and secondary classrooms that also provided career exploration or experimentation:

- The [Equitable Classrooms Challenge](#) prize was awarded to [Tyto Online](#), based in Buffalo, New York and led by Lindsey Trof, founder & CEO of Immersed Games. Tyto Online is an experiential video game that empowers students to explore science phenomena and STEM while actively learning through authentic, meaningful problem-solving activities. Tyto Online was awarded \$175,000.
- The [Indigenous Communities Challenge](#) prize was awarded to [Every Kid Gets a Robot](#) based in Troy, Michigan and led by Danielle Boyer, youth founder & activist of The STEAM Connection. Every Kid Gets a Robot increases technical educational accessibility for youth with an affordable robotics kit. Every Kid Gets a Robot was awarded \$75,000.

[MIT Solve's 2021 Global Challenges](#) included: Antiracist Technology in the U.S., Equitable Classrooms, Digital Inclusion, Health Security & Pandemics, Resilient Ecosystems, and the Indigenous Communities Fellowship.

"All of the finalists' solutions were impressive," said ASA Vice President of Strategy & Innovation, Alisa Wilke. "What stands out about Tyto Online is that it is an actual game that allows learners to try on different careers and explore problem solving, and we love the energy

and precision that Founder and CEO Lindsey Tروف and her team brought to their pitch and interview process.”

The target population for the Tyto Online game is middle school students where STEM interest drop-off often occurs. The project solution focused on the public school system, with more access to diverse students. The team also focused on including student populations most commonly underrepresented in STEM: both girls and minorities.

“Every Kid Gets a robot impressed us with their truly innovative robotics kits that are made from recycled materials—we’re excited to support Founder Danielle Boyer and her team as they continue to scale this solution,” said Wilke.

Many [indigenous youths struggle to access quality technical education](#). There are many contributing factors for this from a lack of resources to a lack of representation in technical fields. The American Indian Policy Institute (ASU) found that 18 percent of tribal reservation residents have no internet access at home, wireless or land-based, so Boyer and team wanted to solve that problem.

Submitted solutions need to be embedded as part of the core curriculum, utilize project-based learning, ensure equitable access, and have an emphasis on teacher professional development. The Equitable Classrooms Challenge sought solutions that will help bring equity to students engaged in distance learning in the United States and around the world. The Indigenous Communities Challenge asked Indigenous leaders throughout the United States: How can Native innovators in the U.S. use traditional knowledge and technology to drive social, environmental, and economic impact in their communities? Solver teams were selected by a panel of cross-sector judges.

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit committed to helping kids know themselves, know their options, and make informed choices to achieve their education and career goals. ASA® has a 60-year legacy of working directly with students to increase their access to higher education through loans and financial education. ASA has turned its experience into impactful solutions for students in grades 6-12 to help them pursue their dreams. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-us.

Media Contact:

Sandy Dawkins
Director, PR/Communications
American Student Assistance
sdawkins@asa.org