

Inventor of pet collar with memory wins contest

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Jonathan Warren surfs competitively, serves customers at a Wellington restaurant and now can call himself an inventor.

The 24-year-old from West Palm Beach, is the man behind the MicroID Collar for pets, which was unveiled Thursday in San Diego at the American Pet Product Manufacturer's Association Global Pet Expo.

He entered a national PetSafe IdeaFetch pet product invention contest in the fall after his father showed him an advertisement for the competition. He got the idea for a pet identification collar by simply remembering his childhood days.

Growing up, Warren carried a little card in his backpack that included his name, address and penicillin allergy in case he got lost. He adapted his parent's idea, reasoning that pets should carry the same important information if they get lost. It's something Warren had thought his dog, Cookie, should wear.

"Years down the line, I see this contest and I thought this is something I always had in mind," he said.

When he got a call last month from PetSafe, Warren was flabbergasted. He had won \$40,000 and would have his idea developed and sold at PETCO stores nationwide.

"I've never had luck in things like this," Warren said. "I was completely stoked out of my mind."

The competitive surfer never fancied himself an inventor, much less a "petrepreneur."

Warren's MicroID Collar beat out 5,000 other ideas in the inaugural pet product invention contest. A computerized flash memory device with the pet owner's information is inserted into the pet's collar. If the pet is lost, whoever finds the animal simply inserts the device into their computer's USB port to get information such as the owner's name, home number, cellular number, work number or any other information such as medical alerts.

The MicroID Collar is better than a regular collar because it can include more information than a pet tag, and it is non-invasive, unlike a microchip that's injected, said Doug Grindstaff, vice president of development at PetSafe, a pet product company.

"The voice of the owner can be there even if the owner isn't," Grindstaff said.

Another advantage is that anyone with a computer can access the information on the MicroID, while a microchip typically can only be read at a shelter or at some veterinary offices, Grindstaff said.

"Jonathan's idea went up against ideas from people who were real inventors," Grindstaff said.

Warren plans to invest most of his prize money in land, but he may allow himself one luxury: a trip to Costa Rica for some surfing.

The MicroID Collar will be sold for \$29.99 in PETCO stores starting in September, with a picture of Warren and his dog Cookie on the package. Once it's on sale, Warren said he may just bring family and friends to the nearest PETCO to show it off.

"That's like, my bragging rights," Warren said. "I can say, 'See that product on the shelf? I invented that.'"