

[STORIES](#) / [PROFILES](#)

Sproutel Takes Home Two Interactive Innovation Awards from SXSW

[✉ Email](#)[f Facebook](#)[in LinkedIn](#)[t Twitter](#)

Photo Courtesy Sproutel

By Courtney Gabrielson

March 26, 2019, 12:53pm EDT

Providence-based [Sproutel](#), the "patient-centered R&D shop" with a mission to "create technology at the intersection of patient and market needs," [won big](#) at the 22nd annual SXSW Interactive Innovation Awards Presented by KPMG in Austin earlier this month.

The company built and developed [My Special Aflac Duck](#) for insurance company Aflac, a "comforting companion" for children with cancer that's controlled via an app.

The device won the two companies, along with Carol Cone On Purpose and The Nation of Artists, the top prize in the Robotics and Hardware category — as well as a special honor as the winner of the people's choice award.

These acknowledgements are not only the results of both Sproutel's work developing the device, but also an eight-month submission and voting process that began in June 2018. Participants from "around the world" submitted their work for a potential award, with just five finalists across 13 categories invited to come to [SXSW](#), a storied multi-media conference and festival in Austin.

There, finalists participated in a showcase in front of attendees and judges, with winners ultimately announced at the [Interactive Innovation Awards Ceremony](#) on March 11.

"It was incredible to receive recognition at SXSW for Sproutel with our product My Special Aflac Duck," Sproutel co-founder Aaron Horowitz told Rhode Island Inno in an email. "This product has truly been a labor of love for our entire company. ... Our team is so very proud to have this work highlighted, especially at an event like SXSW. After becoming a finalist in the Robotics & Hardware category, we had hopes that we might win, but we were truly surprised and humbled to be selected as People's Choice — an award that was given to the product that received the most votes from attendees at the conference."

The award wasn't the first accomplishment for the My Special Aflac Duck and Sproutel. "We worked with over 100 children undergoing chemotherapy to collaboratively design the duck with the goals of delivering comfort and joy," Horowitz said. "Since beginning to distribute ducks in September, we've worked with Aflac to donate 3,000 ducks to children at over 148 hospitals."

Led by Horowitz and co-founder Hannah Chung, Sproutel was established in 2012 and [has raised \\$836,000](#) via a seed fund, angel investors and a grant. It's also made headlines for its work developing Jerry the Bear, another smart toy that helps sick users better understand their illness through play.

Editor's Note: Sproutel was named one of Rhode Island Inno's [19 Startups to Watch](#) in 2019.

Keep Digging



A conversation with fintech platform Marstone's CEO

[Profiles](#)



Introducing the 2021 Providence Design Catalyst program graduates

[Profiles](#)



Brown students team up on app for solo soccer training

[Profiles](#)



Rhode Island nurse develops device to preserve N95 masks

[Profiles](#)

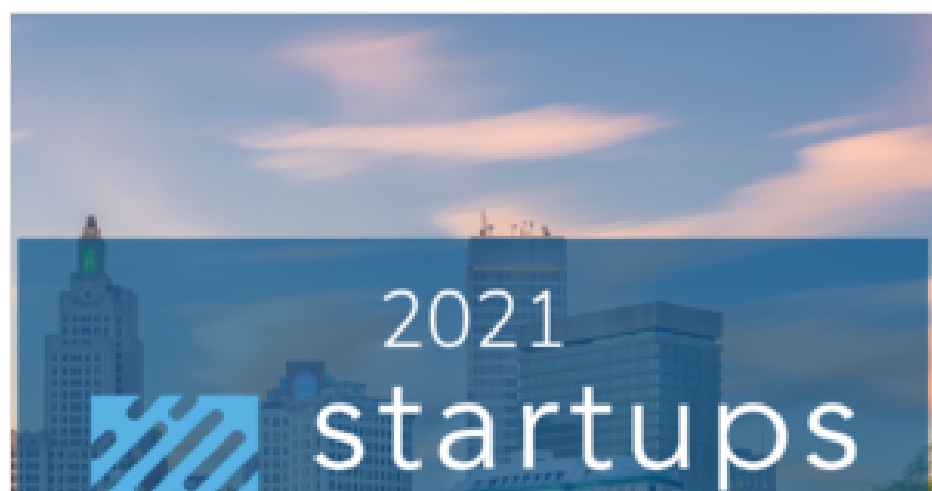


Inspired by sibling, teen inventor combines shirts and fidget toys

[Profiles](#)

Spotlight

[More](#)





10 Rhode Island Startups to Watch in 2021

[See More >](#)



Ecosystem Guides

[See More >](#)

Want to stay ahead of who & what is next? Sent weekly, the Beat is your definitive look at Rhode Island's innovation economy, offering news, analysis & more on the people, companies & ideas driving your state forward.

[Share the Beat](#)

[Sign Up](#)

Founding Partners



[Back to Top ▲](#)

RHODEISLANDINNO

© 2022 American City Business Journals. All rights reserved. Use of and/or registration on any portion of this site constitutes acceptance of our User Agreement (updated as of 1/1/21) and Privacy Policy and Cookie Statement (updated as of 1/1/21). The material on this site may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, cached or otherwise used, except with the prior written permission of American City Business Journals.