

## **Jessica Matthews: Disarming Social Issues Through Social Invention**

Jessica Matthews has never been an engineer. In fact, during school she studied social sciences and business, but in her 2009 CGI U Commitment to Action she came up with an idea that had the potential to completely change the way we look at access to energy in developing countries.

**Jessica and her team committed to developing the SOCKET, a soccer ball that captures kinetic energy during play and turns it into electrical energy that can be used to light lamps or charge batteries and devices.**

She may have never taken a computer science or physics class, but her innovative idea and inspiring experience with CGI U will always be an amazing example of exactly what CGI U works toward.

Jessica has been lauded for her innovation and social entrepreneurship, being named Black Enterprise's "40 Under 40 Next Generation of Women in Power," and Scientist of the Year by the Harvard Foundation, both in 2012, less than three years after launching her commitment with CGI U. Now, Jessica has committed to working on the project full-time and has expanded her commitment as the CEO and Founder of Uncharted Play, a non-profit organization with the mission of "connecting the world through social invention," all of which began with CGI U.

### **The Starting Whistle**

During her junior year of undergraduate studies at Harvard University, Jessica was assigned a project in which she was asked to combat a social issue through art and science. No one working with her on the project had engineering experience but a few, including Jessica, had spent time volunteering or working in the developing world. This connection led them to a collaboration focused on finding a common thread between the developing communities they had come to know. The team found many, but two that stood out to them were the amount of play children participated in, particularly with soccer, and a lack of access to electrical power. It is where these two observations meet that the concept of the

SOCCKET was founded. Once this idea came about, however, the team needed to give themselves a bit of an education on engineering.

Jessica and her peers started developing their Commitment to Action in a surprising- although perhaps not unusual- fashion. They began their research on Wikipedia and Youtube. Now, the SOCCKET has its own page on each. After CGI U 2009, Jessica received a grant from Walmart and raised over \$90,000 on Kickstarter, moving ahead swiftly with the support and inspiration given to her from the CGI U community.

### **Turning Play Into Power**

US Youth soccer reports over 3 million kids registering for soccer teams annually, not including all of the kids who play during recess or freetime on their own, or the millions of kids worldwide who play soccer every day. Sports have long been used as a tool for education and to promote cross culture communication or healthy lifestyles, but the SOCCKET is the first to transform the way children in developing countries view and use energy.

The SOCCKET captures kinetic energy through coil mechanism that converts the energy into electrical power. Just 30 minutes of play can provide 3 hours of electricity; that gives this product a play to power ratio of 1 to 6.

Research and Development for the SOCCKET began in 2009, and by June of 2014 they were developing their eighth prototype, leading to pilot runs in 10 different countries, such as South Africa, Nicaragua, Jordan, Nigeria, and Mexico.

**Jessica wants to look beyond energy, finding ways to engage people around the world through social innovation and entrepreneurship.**

### **The Winning Goal**

Jessica plans on reaching people of developing nations around the world with her work, decreasing dependence on kerosene usage, and improving the general health of individuals through play. Through her innovation, she hopes to help in building community bonds and

encouraging creativity, showing kids that you can succeed with entrepreneurial spirit, regardless of your circumstances.

Jessica cites her experience with CGI U as the reason she pursued her commitment past its original time frame and goals. The experience she had participating in workshops and networking with partners, has inspired her to continue with her work. Showing her passion as a change maker, Jessica was invited to join President Clinton for the opening plenary session at CGI U 2011, during which he reminded the audience members, "If ever there was an innovator, she's it."