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The Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute (University of Missouri) To Sponsor SparkLabKC's Demo Day

MU Journalism Graduate and New Media Entrepreneur, Jim Spencer,
to Deliver Keynote Address.

Kansas City, Mo. – July 22, 2013 – SparkLabKC, a Kansas City-based business accelerator, has announced that the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute (RJI) will sponsor SparkLabKC's Demo Day events scheduled for August 23, 2013 at the National World War I Museum in Kansas City, MO.

Jim Spencer, founder of the fast-growing Newsy mobile video news service and a digital media veteran, has agreed to provide the Demo Day keynote address.

SparkLabKC - Using a proven business accelerator model adapted to the Kansas City region, SparkLabKC is providing support services for 10 startup companies. These startup companies receive seed capital, mentoring, free workspace and free legal, accounting, financial and human resources advisory services during an intense 90-day program.

The capstone event for each SparkLabKC class is a formal Demo Day during which each company will pitch its business to prospective Angel Investors and Venture Capital Investors.

"We are very pleased to have RJI as the sponsor for SparkLabKC's first Demo Day event," said Kevin Fryer, SparkLabKC managing director and Kansas City entrepreneur. "A business accelerator bridges two gaps for startups – the experience gap and the investment gap. Our team has worked hard to recruit more than 100 mentors to help bridge the experience gap. With RJI's support for Demo Day, we intend to help bridge the investment gap."

SparkLabKC is inviting investors from across the Midwest in an effort to engage on-going investment support for early stage companies in the Kansas City region.

SparkLabKC sponsors and partners include: Polsinelli; Meara. Welch. Browne.; Mid-America Angels Investments, LLC; Missouri Bank; OneLouder; HR On-Call Solutions; DST Systems, Inc.; EPR Properties; MRIGlobal; KC Next; University of Missouri-Kansas City Innovation Center; University of Kansas Center for Technology Commercialization; University of Missouri and The Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute.

The Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute – "RJI is pleased to sponsor SparkLabKC's inaugural Demo Day events," said Randy Picht, Executive Director at the Donald W. Reynolds

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Journalism Institute. He added, “RJI is deeply involved with experimentation in new approaches to journalism. Startup companies and new tools to solve new problems have become increasingly important to journalism. Our relationship with SparkLabKC provides a better understanding of the power of an accelerator to create vibrant, new businesses that can contribute to RJI’s mission.”

Mr. Picht has collaborated with the SparkLabKC team for several months as it has ramped up operations for its first class, which formally launched on May 29, 2013. In addition, Mr. Picht helped recruit Jim Spencer to serve as the SparkLabKC Demo Day keynote.

RJI’s mission is to improve democracy through better journalism. Through a combination of research, fellowships and joint partnerships, the institute explores emerging and innovative solutions to some of journalism’s most significant issues.

In addition to helping jumpstart ideas, RJI has taken equity stakes in several companies, including Newsy, to help get some new ideas into the industry faster.

Mr. Jim Spencer – Mr. Spencer is the president and founder at Columbia, Missouri-based Newsy. In addition to his responsibilities with Newsy, he serves as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. He has a long history of involvement with Internet-based news and information companies as a journalist, business leader, consultant and investor.

A news analyzer, not an aggregator, [Newsy](#) is a video news service producing daily video news that highlight the nuances in reporting. Through 2-3 minute multisource videos available on mobile devices and the web, Newsy accelerates the understanding of how a news story is reported from sources around the world.

Jim Spencer has helped lead several successful Internet start-ups and established online companies including Newsy. Jim was VP of Content and Answers at Ask Jeeves (Ask.com) where he was responsible for all search queries and helped lead the company to a top 15 website and through a successful initial public offering. Prior to Ask Jeeves, Jim was the GM of News and Information Programming at AOL (News, Sports, Health, Research and International) leading the content, business and partnership operations for one of AOL’s major business units.

For 11 years, Mr. Spencer has served as Managing Partner for Media Convergence Group, an investment company focused on commercializing media content with emerging technologies.

About SparkLabKC: SparkLabKC is an early-stage business accelerator based in Kansas City, Mo., created to help driven Midwestern entrepreneurs forge their ideas into successful companies. SparkLabKC selects 11 promising startups each year for a 90-day intense, in-residence, mentor-driven program that provides up to \$18,000 in seed capital, business advisory services, free workspace and a formal demonstration day with potential investors. This is a proven accelerator program adapted to the Kansas City region. The program builds on public-private partnerships and the strengths of the region’s vast entrepreneurial community. Startups that have been through this kind of program have a superior track record of generating new companies, new jobs and achieving a significant impact in their communities. For more information go to www.SparkLabKC.com.

About RJI: RJI was launched in 2004 with a grant of \$31 million from the [Donald W. Reynolds Foundation](#). In conjunction with the centennial celebration of the [Missouri School of Journalism](#), RJI's headquarters were opened in September 2008. This 50,000 square-foot facility on the [University of Missouri](#) campus has state-of-the-art resources to test and demonstrate new technologies, experiment with new approaches to producing, designing and delivering news, information and advertising, and to host conferences that can be live-streamed around the world.

RJI's work crosses diverse specialties within journalism, including media convergence, editorial content and methods, the evolution of advertising, innovation in management and the impact of new technologies. It also includes varied fields on campus such as law, computer science, marketing, education and other disciplines. For more information go to <http://www.rjionline.org/>

About Newsy: Promising to make you smarter, faster, Newsy is the only video news service that allows users to compare news sources from around the world to see how a story unfolds. Through concise videos available on the web and mobile devices, Newsy accelerates the understanding of a news story. Producing more than 2000 multi-source videos per month for its website, apps and partners, Newsy generates millions of views per month. Newsy has won two Appy Awards, a Davey Award and a W3 Award. Its highly rated free apps are available to download from iTunes, Google Play, the Windows Phone Marketplace and the Nokia Store.

Why Columbia for Newsy headquarters: The first and one of the finest journalism schools combined with the cost structure were the two driving factors. Newsy has access to a smart and driven talent pool, and the support of a university community that values innovation. The result is a remarkable newsroom that produces high quality, economically viable content.

Link to interview with Jim Spencer:

<http://www.appolicious.com/tech/articles/3845-meet-the-makers-q-a-with-jim-spencer-ceo-of-newsy>