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Proto Labs Expands Cool Idea! Award to the European Union

MAPLE PLAIN, Minn. – Jan. 19, 2012 – After seeing the success of the first [Cool Idea! Award](#) program, [Proto Labs](#), the world's fastest manufacturer of CNC machined and injection-molded parts, has announced the expansion of its program to include the European Union in 2012. The Cool Idea! Award, which launched in the United States last year, gives product designers the opportunity to bring innovative product ideas to life. In addition to the expansion, Proto Labs has also increased the award amount from \$100,000 to \$250,000 worth of prototyping and short-run production services.

"The response to Cool Idea! has been incredible, so we knew we wanted to expand the program's reach," said Proto Labs founder and CTO Larry Lukis. "We're committed to supporting designers and the development of new ideas, and we can't wait to find out what kinds of ideas we'll see from a new crop of innovators!"

The Cool Idea! Award was created with the belief that there are many great product ideas that don't get off the ground due to lack of resources and funds. Unlike other awards that recognize products or innovative design after the product has already launched, the Cool Idea! Award program helps designers take their product idea or part from a 3D CAD model to its first-run production stage with Proto Labs' proprietary Firstcut CNC machining and/or Protomold injection-molding services. In order to be eligible for consideration, Cool Idea! Award applicants must demonstrate the benefits of their product to the end-user and explain what makes it a 'cool idea.'

Cool Idea! Award recipients make up a wide range of industries and product offerings. [Past winners include:](#)

- **Don Ladanyi, TruFlavorWare:** flatware to help alleviate metal sensitivity for chemotherapy patients
- **Rice University, R-one Robots:** swarm robots to improve engineering literacy
- **Whirlwind Wheelchair International, RoughRider:** highly durable wheelchair to handle rough terrain
- **Matt Nestor, QuicKaddy:** magnetic hex key case to easily store and remove a tool
- **Andy Miller and Tess Bakke, SkyLight:** adapter device that connects smartphones to microscopes to digitally capture and share scientific images

For more information about the Cool Idea! Award, visit www.protolabs.com/coolidea.

About Proto Labs

Proto Labs is a leading online and technology-enabled quick-turn manufacturer of low-volume CNC-machined and injection molded custom parts for prototyping and short-run production. The company provides "Real Parts, Really Fast" to product developers worldwide and has two quick-turn services in North America, Europe

and Japan: Firstcut (www.firstcut.com) and CNC machining and Protomold (www.protomold.com) injection molding. Both are capable of providing parts in as fast as one business day. Product developers who use Proto Labs for prototypes and short-run production can upload a 3D CAD file at any one of Proto Labs online sites, get an interactive quotation and place an order for Proto Labs services directly online. For more information, visit: www.protolabs.com.

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