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Online 'storefront' ad agency honored

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Updated: 09/10/2009 10:27:34 PM CDT

A Minneapolis company that creates "shoppable" online advertisements for social networking sites like Facebook won a total of \$40,000 and the top prize in the fifth annual Minnesota Cup competition Thursday.

Alvenda is an advertising network that lets merchants put small Web stores in ads on sites. Users can make purchases on the ad without leaving the Web site. Last month, 1-800-FLOWERS.com used Alvenda to become the first retailer to launch a storefront within the pages of Facebook.

Alvenda co-founders Wade Gerten and Brian Howe received \$20,000 in seed money for winning the competition's High Tech Division on Sept. 2. They received the grand prize and the Minnesota Cup trophy at an awards ceremony at the University of Minnesota Thursday evening.

The Minnesota Cup is a statewide competition with more than \$130,000 in prize money, as well as consulting services, to support the state's best new business ideas. The competition this year pitted the winners from six separate divisions against one another for the grand prize.

Division winners included: Drazil Foods, which created fruit juice-herbal tea blends; Packet Power, which has devices that let homeowners monitor their electricity usage; Pursuit Vascular Inc., which developed a disposable device to reduce catheter-

related infections for hemodialysis patients; Rural Renewable Energy Alliance, an organization that works on renewable energy education projects with low-income families in northern Minnesota; and student winners ManCave Worldwide, which makes bottle openers, beer mugs and other items with a ManCave logo.

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