FluentPet Earns 2022 Grand Prize of Purina Pet Care Innovation Prize Program

San Diego, California-Based Pet Startup Wins Additional Funding and Support from Purina in Annual Competition

ST. LOUIS, March 25, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Five pet care startups from across the U.S. pitched their businesses to pet industry influencers and investors at Global Pet Expo for a chance to win the 2022 Pet Care Innovation Prize powered by Purina. The Global Pet Expo is the pet industry's largest trade show attracting pet focused entrepreneurs and businesses of all sizes and stages from around the world. The grand prize is worth $10,000 and comes with support from pet care leader Purina. This year's grand prize winner was FluentPet. The San Diego-based startup is the company behind the FluentPet HexTile System: a way to combine recordable sound buttons and connecting HexTiles that enables dogs, cats, and other animals to express themselves and be understood by humans. FluentPet uses cognitive science and academic research to make teaching, learning, and communicating easier for pets and their people.

"We are so grateful to be this year's Grand Prize winner, a prize we've been working toward for a number of years now. We're so excited for the awareness this prize brings to the amazing potential of the dogs and cats we live with. Thank you Purina," said Leo Trottier, Founder and CEO of FluentPet.

FluentPet was selected by a panel of judges consisting of investors, industry experts, and executives from Purina's 9 Square Ventures division. In January, FluentPet was one of five startups selected from more than 120 companies from 75 cities globally to participate in the 2022 class for the Pet Care innovation Prize. Each winner received $10,000 cash and participated in a bootcamp accelerator experience at Purina's headquarters earlier this month with business experts, industry leaders, pet experts and veterinarians, & Purina executives to broaden their network, strengthen their business plan and access knowledge from across the pet care landscape. The 2022 class of Pet Care Innovation Prize winners represents the latest and greatest in the $109 billion* pet care industry.

The other 2022 Pet Care Innovation Prize Winners are:

Bright Planet Pet (brightplanetpet.com) - Bloomington, Minnesota-based Bright Planet Pet makes 100% plant-based dog treats that taste and smell like real meat. Made from sustainable and all-natural ingredients, Bright Planet treats create up to 90% less carbon emissions and use 68% less water than comparable meat-based treats. For every bag sold, Bright Planet makes a donation to plant one tree.

Paway (**www.paway.com**) **- Los Angeles, California-based** Paway is a social network just for dogs, available on iOS & Android. Members can create a social profile to meet local dog parents, keep track of their dog's health & find dog friendly places. In addition, Paway sells premium software (PawayPro) to pet care professionals to help manage, grow, and promote their business without paying premiums to 3rd party apps.

QSM Diagnostics (www.qsmdiagnostics.com) - Boston, Massachusetts-based QSM Diagnostics is fundamentally changing how bacterial infections are diagnosed and treated. The company's patented technology allows veterinarians to diagnose and monitor bacterial infections in dogs and cats using disposable sensors for point of care infection detection and monitoring. No

software is required to run a test, and results are available in two minutes from the time a sample is collected.

uPetsia (www.upetsia.com) - Oro Valley, Arizona-based uPetsia solves the problem of bad dog breath by modifying natural canine oral bacteria to produce mint aromas. These bacteria can be incorporated into treats and food and fed to dogs, giving them mint breath for several hours, unlike traditional treats or toothpastes with mint flavor added, which only last for minutes.

"We are very impressed by FluentPet and the entire 2022 class for the passion and innovation they are bringing to the pet care industry," said Bill Broun, co-lead of Purina's 9 Square Ventures division, and Vice President of Mergers and Acquisitions at Purina. "Programs like the Pet Care Innovation Prize, allow us to spend time with and support the growth of talented startups while working together to shape the future of pet care."

The Pet Care Innovation Prize was created to support and connect with early stage pet care startups that are currently in market with an innovative business addressing pet and pet owner needs in the areas of pet health and wellness, services, technology, and food, treats or litter. The Pet Care Innovation Prize is a collaborative effort of Purina's 9 Square Ventures division and impact investors Active Capital. Previous Pet Care Innovation Prize winners have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in equity and prizes from investors and accelerator programs across the U.S.

As Purina's corporate venturing group, 9 Square Ventures has been focused on connecting with pet care startups since 2014. The team's mission is to leverage Purina's knowledge, experience, and financial resources to help emerging pet care startups scale their businesses and make a positive impact on the lives of as many pets and their owners as possible. The group has been steadily investing millions of dollars in a diverse set of early-stage pet care startups since it was founded in 2014.

To find out more about the Pet Care Innovation program, visit PetCareInnovation.net.

About Active Capital:

Active Capital is a St. Louis-based impact investing leader, helping startups and investors come together to grow innovative products and initiatives. Active Capital manages the Pet Care Innovation Prize.

About Purina

Nestlé Purina PetCare creates richer lives for pets and the people who love them. Founded in 1894, Purina has helped dogs and cats live longer, healthier lives by offering scientifically based nutritional innovations. Purina manufactures some of the world's most trusted and popular pet care products, including Purina ONE, Pro Plan, Fancy Feast and Tidy Cats. Our more than 8,700 U.S. associates take pride in our trusted pet food, treat and litter brands that feed 51 million dogs and 65 million cats every year. More than 500 Purina scientists, veterinarians, and pet care experts ensure our commitment to unsurpassed quality and nutrition.

Purina promotes responsible pet care through our scientific research, our products, and our support for pet-related organizations. Over the past five years, Purina has contributed more than $150 million towards organizations that bring, and keep, people and pets together, as well as those that help our communities and environment thrive.

Purina is part of Nestlé, a global leader in Nutrition, Health and Wellness. For more information, visit purina.com or subscribe here to get the latest Purina news.

*American Pet Products Association

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