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TIME-AWARE VIRTUAL NEIGHBORHOOD PROVIDES REAL-TIME LOCAL SEARCH

SEATTLE, WA – Local search takes on a new dimension this summer, as a tiny Seattle company unveils what it bills as “the intersection of time and place.”

Villageware will introduce a time-aware, interactive digital map and search platform called LiveVillage (<http://www.livevillage.com>), designed to capture ever-changing local content at its source. With a Seattle beta edition to be released on August 15, 2006, they plan to show that time, and a locally-rooted approach, are the missing links of local search.

“We feel that local businesses and local people are the wellspring of local content,” explains Villageware founder and chief developer Mike Safoutin. “But despite the proliferation of third-party search engines and local web sites, it’s still too hard to keep up with what’s around us.” The main culprits are time-related facts, such as store hours and event schedules, as well as highly specific details that can change rapidly, such as menu items or product inventory, he says.

As Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft focus largely on isolating the local from the global, Villageware takes a more integrated approach. “We had to invent two things – a way to round up timely local content before it gets diluted or outdated, and a way for people to decipher it all,” Safoutin says. The result was a client application that hosts a searchable virtual model of a real local neighborhood.

LiveVillage is presented as the first fully time-oriented digital map, with such features as color-coding of shops to indicate their open or closed status, mapping of events as future, present or past, and visual depiction of event times and store hours in a “TV guide”-like view. Interactive features and a self-updating design allow users to contribute, receive and share new content automatically.

The software will be distributed in part through local retailers, who will be invited to give away co-branded copies to customers as promotional merchandise. Villageware anticipates that fresh content will be generated regularly as participating shopkeepers use LiveVillage to publish to this audience. “We give businesses a way to express themselves to a truly local audience, many of whom picked up the software in their store,” Safoutin says. “It’s a tangible product, visible to people and businesses that purely web-based media have a hard time reaching.”

Villageware’s current focus is on partnering with Seattle neighborhood businesses, then completing the Manhattan edition and applying the blueprint to other communities. “Our experience with Manhattan suggests that we could go national quite rapidly with the right investment,” Safoutin says. Villageware also publishes Lost in Seattle (www.lostinseattle.com), an online map of Seattle that accompanies the Seattle edition. Similar sites are planned for each local edition.

Founded in 1999, Villageware is a media technology company located in Seattle, Washington, with a mission to give people total knowledge of their local community.

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