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South Auckland engineer in arms race with Nike to help babies fit their shoes

KYMBERLEE FERNANDES

Last updated 16:27, August 30 2017



KYMBERLEE FERNANDES/STUFF

Sarah de Guzman with a part of the prototype.

A south Auckland engineering graduate is competing with the likes of Nike and Adidas to come up with a way to help babies fit their shoes better.

Sarah de Guzman, 22, has just graduated with a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering with honours from Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

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The former McAuley High student is now developing a technology to be used in children's shoes, which will alert parents on when the tots need new shoes and to identify potential podiatry problems.



KYMBERLEE FERNANDES/STUFF

The shoes are being equipped to help parents understand when their tots need new shoes.

She is part of a five-member team selected as a finalist for the coveted \$100,000 prize C-Prize. They are working alongside the children's shoe company Bobux.

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Guzman explains that metal is woven into a fabric and is placed inside the shoes around the toes. At the back of the shoe will be a battery and Bluetooth device.



KYMBERLEE FERNANDES/STUFF

To be cost effective she plans to use cheaper materials like stainless steel instead of silver.

"It will then sense the growth or any changes with the child's foot and alert the parents via an app."

The shoes are being equipped to measure the size of the feet of children aged between nine and twenty-four months, who can't explain how they feel.

"We're trying to bridge that gap by actually trying to feel for the children. From Bobux's research, a lot of what they've seen is parents' biggest pain is not knowing when to change the child's shoe," she says.

The focus of the design is to "not place your child's foot in a box".

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Bobux shoes usually retail for \$45 and upwards.

"It would definitely increase the price but we are looking into cheaper materials like stainless steel instead of silver. They do the same function," Guzman says.

"We're trying to avoid electrocution by using a different sensing technique. It is safe for travel. We are looking at how to waterproof it."

Brands like Nike, Adidas and Under Armour are working on similar technologies, she says.

The C-Prize is a technology competition run by Callaghan Innovation. Participants have to deliver technology-driven solutions to actual industry problems.

As a finalist, her team has received \$10,000

cash to develop a prototype. They also get access to several support programmes and workshops.

Of the ten finalists, only one winner will be picked and awarded a \$100,000 prize on December 1. The package includes \$50,000 cash, a market insights trip to North America, support with commercialisation opportunities, a 3D printer, and a tenancy at the Human Performance Innovation Centre in Auckland.

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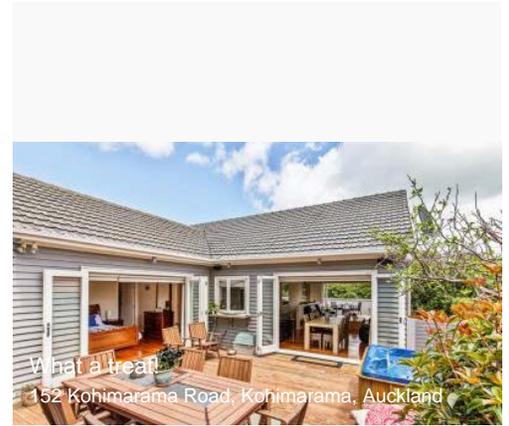
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