

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM

For Immediate Release
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Ray Kurzweil to be honored with AVAM's Grand Visionary Award at 2014 Gala Celebration

Baltimore, MD—The American Visionary Art Museum (AVAM) is pleased to announce details for its **2014 Gala** honoring author, inventor, futurist, and Director of Engineering at Google, **Ray Kurzweil**. On Thursday, January 30, 2014, AVAM will present its 2014 Grand Visionary Award to the world famed “Singularitarian” whom *The Wall Street Journal* calls “the restless genius” and *Forbes* has described as “the ultimate thinking machine.” AVAM’s near neighbor, the National Federation of the Blind, will be on hand to help honor Kurzweil, a long-time champion and partner for technologies to improve the lives of the visually impaired. The Gala evening will explore technology’s impact on our lives and future in compliment to the Visionary Museum's current blockbuster exhibition, *Human, Soul & Machine: The Coming Singularity!* AVAM will also present local “boy genius” inventor, **Jack Andraka**, with an award for his brilliant work in conceiving and developing a revolutionary and inexpensive test to detect pancreatic, ovarian, and lung cancers.

AVAM selects its Grand Visionary Honorees for their courage as intuitive innovators and in recognition of their life’s creative work to expand the realm of human dignity, beauty, and social justice. Past American Visionary Art Museum Grand Visionary Awardees include: Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu; civil rights activists Julian Bond and wife Pam Horowitz; Nobel Prize in Chemistry recipient Peter Agre, M.D.; *PostSecret* founder and suicide prevention activist Frank Warren; environmental activist/The Body Shop founder Dame Anita Roddick; healthcare activist/humanitarian Patch Adams, M.D., comedian/activist Lewis Black; and most recently, award-winning self-taught Chef Patrick O’Connell.

AVAM’s 2014 Gala will be held Thursday, January 30, 2014 starting at 6pm, at its historic Baltimore Inner Harbor location: 800 Key Highway. Gala Tickets are offered at \$500 VIP level, \$300 Regular, and \$250 for AVAM Members, and can be purchased by

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contacting Abby Baer at 410-244-1900 x247 or abby@avam.org. Regular tickets include admission to the cocktail hour, seating at the Visionary Award program and dinner, and admission to the After Party. In addition to the regular ticket perks, VIP Tickets include an exclusive exhibition tour with AVAM Founder and Director, Rebecca Hoffberger, meet-and-greet with honorees Ray Kurzweil and Jack Andraka, preferred seating for the program and dinner, and a deluxe thank you gift bag. Complimentary valet parking is offered for all Gala guests.

All proceeds from AVAM's annual Gala benefit the national museum's unique educational programming and exhibitions. The Gala is AVAM's major annual fundraising event—never stuffy and ever playful—reducing even past honoree, Archbishop Tutu, to both laughter and tears.

AVAM is also thrilled to announce the return of its wildly popular **Gala After Party** (9-11pm), featuring music by **The Amish Outlaws** and **DJ Carl Jr.** of Classic Disc Jockeys, light fare, drinks, and more. Don't miss a futuristic fashion show, honorees Ray Kurzweil and Jack Andraka, and plenty more surprises at this post-Gala bash! Attire: Mad Scientist, Tech Geek, or Robo-Chic! After Party Tickets will be on-sale for \$50 General Admission, \$35 for AVAM Members, thru Missiontix.com starting December 16. Visit Missiontix.com to purchase (all proceeds benefit AVAM).

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Ray Kurzweil

Ray Kurzweil is one of the world's leading inventors, thinkers, and futurists, with a thirty-year track record of accurate predictions. Called "the restless genius" by *The Wall Street Journal* and "the ultimate thinking machine" by *Forbes* magazine, Kurzweil was selected as one of the top entrepreneurs by *Inc.* magazine, which described him as the "rightful heir to Thomas Edison." PBS selected him as one of the "sixteen revolutionaries who made America."

Kurzweil was the principal inventor of the first CCD flat-bed scanner, the first omni-font optical character recognition, the first print-to-speech reading machine for the blind, the first text-to-speech synthesizer, the first music synthesizer capable of recreating the grand piano and other orchestral instruments, and the first commercially marketed large-vocabulary speech recognition.

Among Kurzweil's many honors, he is the recipient of the *National Medal of Technology*, was inducted into the *National Inventors Hall of Fame*, holds twenty honorary Doctorates, and honors from three U.S. presidents.

Ray has written five national best-selling books, including New York Times Best Sellers

The Singularity Is Near (2005) and *How To Create A Mind* (2012). He is Director of Engineering at Google. To learn more about Ray Kurzweil, visit www.kurzweilai.net.

Jack Andraka

Jack Andraka is a Maryland high school student who at age 15 invented an inexpensive and sensitive dipstick-like sensor for the rapid and early detection of pancreatic, ovarian and lung cancers. After a close family friend died of pancreatic cancer, Jack (then a ninth grader) became interested in finding a better early detection diagnostic test. He learned that the lack of a rapid, low-cost early screening method contributed to the poor survival rate among individuals with pancreatic cancer. After thinking further about the problem, he came up with a plan and a budget to put his ideas in motion. After contacting about 200 research professionals at Johns Hopkins University and the National Institutes of Health about his plan, he finally got an acceptance from Dr. Anirban Maitra, Professor of Pathology, Oncology and Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, who became his mentor.

The diagnostic method he developed is more than 90 percent accurate in detecting the presence of pancreatic cancer's biomarker protein called mesothelin, and earned him the grand prize \$75,000 Gordon E. Moore Award—named for Intel's co-founder—after competing with 1,500 other young scientists from 70 countries. He also won other prizes in smaller individual categories for a total award of \$100,500, which he will use towards college. He has formed a company and has applied for both national and international patents. Jack has also won the Smithsonian American Ingenuity Youth Award and has spoken at the Clinton Global Initiative, FutureMed, Chicago Ideas Week, Singularity U, and numerous TEDx events across the country. Jack is a member of the National Junior Wildwater Kayak team, a Life Scout, and has won numerous awards in national and international math competitions. To learn more about Jack Andraka, visit <http://jackandraka.net>. (Bio source: <http://jackandraka.net/about.htm>)

AMERICAN VISIONARY ART MUSEUM (AVAM) is America's official national museum and education center for self-taught, intuitive artistry. Since its opening in 1995, the museum has sought to promote the recognition of intuitive, self-reliant, creative contribution as both an important historic and essential living piece of treasured human legacy. The one-of-a-kind American Visionary Art Museum is located on a 1.1 acre wonderland campus at 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor. Three renovated, historic, industrial buildings house wonders created by farmers, housewives, mechanics, retired folk, the disabled, the homeless, as well as the occasional neurosurgeon—all inspired by the fire within. From carved roots to embroidered rags, tattoos to toothpicks, the visionary transforms dreams, loss, hopes, and ideals into powerful works of art.

VISITOR INFORMATION:

AVAM is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10am – 6pm. The museum is closed on *Mondays, Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day. AVAM is located next to historic Federal Hill Park at 800 Key Highway, Baltimore Inner Harbor, 21230. Admission prices, general museum info, directions, and parking info can be found online at <http://avam.org> or by calling 410-244-1900. **Open Monday, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day as AVAM's celebration of all of life's possibilities—free admission & special programming!*

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