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***FIRST*[™] Championship Ignites Students' Scientific Savvy
with Three Levels of Robotics Challenges, April 16-18, in Atlanta's Georgia Dome**

***FIRST* Founder and Inventor Dean Kamen Expects Young Innovators
Will Enhance the 21st Century Workforce**

Manchester, NH, April 14, 2009 – More than 10,000 students from 28 countries and 533 custom-built robots will swarm Atlanta's Georgia Dome, April 16-18, to compete in the *FIRST*[™] (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Championship, and discover the excitement of science and technology. As students engage in three robotics competitions under one roof, *FIRST* Robotics Competition, *FIRST* Tech Challenge, and *FIRST* LEGO[®] League, *FIRST* founder Dean Kamen believes the career skills they are developing will contribute to a brighter economic future.

"Today, facing the challenges of our fragile global economy and climate change, and addressing worldwide public health concerns, we need innovative thinkers to help solve society's increasingly-complex problems," said Kamen. "Handling robotics challenges and working alongside professional engineers, *FIRST* students develop the skills necessary to be the architects of the solutions we need."

Kamen founded *FIRST*, a not-for-profit organization, to inspire young people's interest and participation in science, technology, and engineering, and motivate them to pursue career opportunities in these fields. *FIRST* students build life and career skills while building robots that can handle complex tasks during robotics games.

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“We have 16-year-olds securing patents and 10-year-olds offering advice on climate change issues to government officials,” Kamen continued. “I am encouraged to see so many positive contributions by *FIRST* students; each one of them is becoming his/her own economic stimulus package for the workforce of the future.”

FIRST students vied for a spot at this weekend’s *FIRST* Championship by competing in regional *FIRST* competitions for several months, displaying sportsmanship and excelling at competitive play. Along their journey, students learned business and marketing skills, as they secured sponsors and developed partnerships among schools, businesses, and communities. Their hard work will culminate in three levels of robotics competitions during the *FIRST* Championship:

***FIRST* ROBOTICS COMPETITION**

The *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) Championship for high-school students is now in its 18th and largest-ever season. This year’s challenge, “LUNACY™,” honors the 40th anniversary of Apollo 11, when NASA landed a man on the moon.

In the “LUNACY” game, robots are designed to pick up 9" game balls and score them in trailers hitched to their opponents’ robots for points during a two- minute and 15-second match. Additional points are awarded for scoring a special game ball, the “Super Cell”, in the opponents' trailers during the last 20 seconds of the match. “LUNACY” is played on a low-friction floor, which means teams must contend with the laws of physics.

In January 2009, FRC teams viewed the game field and received a Kit of Parts made up of motors, batteries, a control system, and a mix of automation components – but no instructions. Working with mentors, students had six weeks to design, build, program, and test their robots to meet the season’s engineering challenge. Once these young inventors built a robot and a strategy to compete, their teams participated in regional competitions that measured the effectiveness of each robot, the power of collaboration, and the determination of the students.

***FIRST* TECH CHALLENGE**

The *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC) is a challenging mid-level robotics competition designed for high-school-age students who want a hands-on learning experience to develop and hone their skills and abilities in science, technology, engineering, and math.

The *FIRST* Tech Challenge World Championship features this year's game, "Face Off!", which was developed with input by professional robotics designers across the country. The challenge mirrors many real-world challenges that robotics engineers face today, such as navigating uneven surfaces, manipulating odd-shaped objects, using sensors to determine the environment, and withstanding physical stress.

FIRST LEGO LEAGUE

FIRST LEGO League (FLL) is a global robotics program for ages 9 to 14 (16 outside of the U.S. and Canada) that ignites enthusiasm for discovery and science. This year's challenge is "Climate Connections." At the *FIRST* LEGO League World Festival this weekend, students will present their research and solutions for solving climate issues, and showcase LEGO MINDSTORMS® robots using engineering concepts.

To prepare for "Climate Connections," students learned about past, current, and future climate conditions with team coaches and mentors; this allowed them to assimilate more about the science behind the challenge and to better understand the work of professionals in that field.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Students who participate in *FIRST* are eligible for close to \$10 million in scholarships from some of the finest science and engineering schools in the country. More than 25 *FIRST* scholarship providers will be featured in Scholarship Row, where representatives will offer information about their organizations' science and engineering programs.

FIRST programs are implemented by 86,000 dedicated volunteers and supported by more than 3,000 corporate sponsors worldwide.

SPONSORS

Abbott Laboratories, Autodesk, Inc., BAE Systems, and The Coca-Cola Company are Official Championship Sponsors of the 2009 *FIRST* Championship. Other sponsors this year are: The Boeing Company – *FIRST* Championship Sponsor; FedEx Corporation – *FIRST* Shipping Sponsor; NASA – Machine Shop and Satellite Broadcast Sponsor; Underwriters Laboratories – *FIRST* Safety Partner; Association for Laboratory Automation – *FIRST* Judges Room & Dinner Sponsor; Google Inc. – *FIRST* Event Sponsor; Georgia Institute of Technology – *FIRST* Scholarship Row Sponsor; Central Intelligence Agency, Rolls-Royce, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute – *FIRST* Robotics Conference Sponsors.

ABOUT FIRST

Accomplished inventor Dean Kamen founded *FIRST* in 1989 to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people. Based in Manchester, N.H., *FIRST* designs accessible, innovative programs to build self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology, and engineering. With the support of many of the world's most well-known companies, the not-for-profit organization hosts the *FIRST* Robotics Competition and *FIRST* Tech Challenge for high-school students, *FIRST* LEGO League for children 9-14 years old, and Junior *FIRST* LEGO League for 6 to 9 year-olds. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

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Editor's Note: *FRC practice matches will be held on April 16 and competition matches will be held on April 17-18. FLL and FTC matches will be held on April 16-17. Beta video and digital photos of previous FIRST competitions are available on request.*