



PRESS RELEASE

More Than 1,000 High School Students To Compete In FIRST Robotics Contest

March 6, 2006

ORLANDO - Robots designed and built by 51 teams of high school students will compete Thursday, March 9, through Saturday, March 11, in the Florida FIRST Regional Robotics event at the UCF Arena.

More than 1,000 students from schools throughout Florida, several U.S. states and Puerto Rico will compete. Gov. Jeb Bush is scheduled to view the action and talk with participants at 9 a.m. Friday, and Lt. Gov. Toni Jennings is scheduled to speak at an invitation-only luncheon at noon Friday at the Fairwinds Alumni Center.

Following practice rounds on Thursday, matches will be held from about 9:20 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Friday and from 9:20 to 11:45 a.m. Saturday. The final rounds will be from 1 to 3 p.m. Saturday. The competition is free and open to the public.

The FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics competition challenges the teams and their mentors to solve a problem in six weeks using a standard set of parts and a common set of rules. Teams build the robots from the parts and enter them in a series of competitions designed by Dean Kamen, the inventor of the Segway human transporter, and a committee of engineers. Local corporations, individuals and colleges serve as mentors and provide financial support.

This year's game "Aim High," is like basketball for robots, which must throw or project balls through the air. As many as 80 balls will be in play during each 2-minute, 10-second match.

NASA-Kennedy Space Center and the University of Central Florida's College of Engineering and Computer Science co-host the event because it helps to develop Florida's high-tech workforce.

"This high-spirited event inspires and motivates students to pursue educational and career opportunities that prepare them to enter the technologically advanced workplace of the future," said Wayne Weinberg, director of development for the College of Engineering and Computer Science and a FIRST committee member.

Teams are awarded prizes for excellence in design, team spirit and their ability to overcome obstacles. Participants learn about teamwork, budgeting and how to

manage projects.

Cindy Andrews, a teacher and team adviser at Colonial High School, said the students have been working after school and weekends on their robots. A retired engineer is mentoring the team, and Lockheed Martin and Walt Disney World provided financial support.

During the five years that Colonial has competed in the event, Andrews has seen a growing interest in engineering in many students as it "simulates real engineering experiences."

Twenty-six teams will advance from regional competitions to face off at the championship FIRST Robotics games in Atlanta in April. More than 28,000 high school students and 1,125 teams are expected to participate in 33 regional events this year.

For more information, go to www.firstfloridaregional.org or www.usfirst.org/robotics.

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