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**Eight Finalist Teams Named in National Science/
Community Service Competition for Middle-Schoolers,
Win Trip to Walt Disney World®**

WASHINGTON, D.C.—June 4, 2014—Bright ideas, solid research, and teamwork won eight teams of middle-schoolers from across the country a spot as finalists in the **Christopher Columbus Awards**, a nationwide program of the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation, which challenges middle-school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities, utilizing STEM techniques and processes. These eight teams will compete for \$16,000 in scholarships and the **Columbus Foundation Community Grant** at the Christopher Columbus Awards National Championship Week in June.

- **Team GPSolutions**, from Lawton Chiles Middle Academy in Lakeland, Fla., led by coach Debbie Viertel, has developed a small device that attaches to wallets, cell phones, or any valuable in order to help locate that item if it is misplaced or stolen.
- The **Pipe Savers Team**, from STEM Enrichment in Hollis, N.H., led by coach Kirsten Szczeszynski, created a device that automatically drains building pipes when it detects that the temperature is cold enough for the pipes to freeze and potentially burst.
- The **High Chair Helper (or H.C.H.) Team**, from Birch Lane Elementary School in Massapequa Park, N.Y., led by coach Brian Mulcahy, developed a solution to infant injuries due to high chairs tipping over—flexible weights that wrap around the front and back legs of a high chair, relocating the center of gravity and reducing the possibility that the chair will tip.
- The **S.E.A.R.C.H. Team**, from Gryphon Academy in Crossnore, N.C., led by coach Elizabeth Hardy, addressed the problem of a lack of engaging science education opportunities in rural areas by creating a mobile science center called S.E.A.R.C.H.
- In response to the declining honey bee population, the **Bee Aware Team**, from Tynecastle Academy in Elk Banner, N.C., led by coach Jenny Fitzpatrick, developed an outreach campaign to inform the public and businesses about the harmful effects of specific chemicals on honey bee populations and the harmful ramifications to human, animal, and plant life.

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FEATURING THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION COMMUNITY GRANT

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- The **Hyperboloid House Team**, from Gahanna Middle School East in Gahanna, Ohio, led by coach Haruna Cofer, have created a hyperboloid-shaped house, made from interlocking, high-strength bamboo connected to flexible joints, that is intended to help withstand an earthquake, with minimal destruction and loss of life.
- Poor emergency response times inspired **Team Protons**, from Academic Center of Sciences in Frisco, Texas, led by coach Bhagyashri Chander, to develop an Android-based mobile application, CERTPRO, which allows emergency response teams to communicate with their local office via SMS and Twitter.
- The **Regina Caeli Academy 1 Team**, from Regina Caeli Academy in Cypress, Texas, led by coach Carl Mixon, invented the Aguabot, a device that senses hidden electric currents underwater, displays the amount of current detected, and sounds an alarm to warn swimmers of the danger of shock.

A panel composed of community leaders, educators, scientists, and other experts in STEM-related fields selected these ideas as the top eight entries in the U.S. More than 900 students and coaches participated nationwide.

Team Wins a Trip to Walt Disney World®

All eight teams and their coaches have won an all-expense-paid trip to the *Walt Disney World*® Resort, where they will compete in the **Christopher Columbus Awards National Championship Week**, June 8–13, 2014, plus a \$200 grant to further develop their projects.

The finalists also will attend the **Christopher Columbus Academy**, a custom-designed educational program. Conducted by scientists, engineers, and educators, the program reveals the science and technology behind the thrills and excitement of the *Magic Kingdom*® and *Disney's Hollywood Studios*.

Two Gold Medal winning teams will be selected, with each team member receiving a \$2,000 scholarship. The entries will be judged again to select the **Columbus Foundation Community Grant** to help bring the winning team's project to life in their community.

Positive Community Change

The Christopher Columbus Awards challenge teams of middle-school students to explore and discover opportunities for positive change in their communities using science and technology. The program is now in its 18th year and has attracted more than 20,000 students from diverse backgrounds all across the U.S.

The program is sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation (CCF), a Presidentially appointed independent Federal Agency. It is endorsed by the Association of Middle Level Education. Past winners have included a team from San Diego that has secured a provisional patent for a specialized seat cushion design that uses sensory feedback to train people to maintain a healthy posture while sitting at a computer, and a group of students from Illinois who developed a multifaceted recycling awareness campaign that increased recycling in their community by 60 percent in just four months.

Strong Participation from Girls, Minorities

The program attracts many students who may not typically enter a science competition. More than half of the entrants are girls, and nearly a third are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, statistics that are higher than those of most science competitions. The

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CCF believes the teamwork aspect and community focus draw a broader range of students to enter.

About the Sponsor

Founded in 1992, upon the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the Americas, the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation (CCF) is an independent Federal government agency that encourages and supports research, study, and labor designed to produce new discoveries in all fields of endeavor for the benefit of mankind. Governed by a Presidentially appointed Board of Trustees, the Foundation seeks to nurture and recognize community service through science and technology by middle and high school students. In addition to the *Christopher Columbus Awards*, the Foundation is restoring the *Agriscience Awards* and *Life Science Awards*, programs promoting the innovations of middle and high school students advancing and bettering the world around them. For more information about the CCF, please visit www.christophercolumbusfoundation.gov.

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