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## **Hollis Student Team Named Gold Medal Winner in National Science/Community Service Competition Held at Walt Disney World®**

### ***Students develop a device that helps prevent pipes from freezing***

WASHINGTON, D.C.—June 17, 2014—Bright ideas, solid research, and teamwork won three students from STEM Enrichment, in Hollis, N.H., a top prize in the Christopher Columbus Awards, a nationwide program of the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation, that challenges middle-school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities, utilizing STEM techniques and processes.

Students Ian Coolidge, Peter Szczeszynski, and Steven Szczeszynski, along with their coach, Kirsten Szczeszynski, won a Gold Medal and a \$2,000 scholarship for each team member for their entry. Known as the **Pipe Savers Team**, the students 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.

Every year, about 250,000 homes in the U.S. suffer water damage from a burst pipe—the second leading cause of homeowners insurance claims in the country. A burst pipe can cause flooding, damage a building's structural integrity, and create favorable conditions for mold and mildew to grow.

After conducting some preliminary research on the problem, the team determined that its solution must be able to (1) function fully during a power outage, (2) completely drain all pipes, to eliminate the risk of water damage entirely, and (3) conserve water, while also being automated, easy to install, and inexpensive. The team tested various pipe configurations before settling on the most optimal model, which they have prototyped and provisionally patented.

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**FEATURING THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION COMMUNITY GRANT**

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The "Pipe Saver" monitors for a power outage and dangerously cold temperatures. If both of these conditions are met, it closes the city or well water, turns off the incoming pressure, and opens a drainage valve, leading to a storage bucket or sewer drain.

"Our goal is to bring a fully functional Pipe Saver to all homeowners at risk of losing property and money due to bursting water pipes," remarked the team members. "We would love to see the number of homes worldwide suffering needlessly from the damage of burst pipes get as close to zero as possible!"

### **Team Wins a Trip to Walt Disney World®**

Eight finalist teams and their coaches won an all-expense-paid trip to the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, where they competed in the **Christopher Columbus Awards' National Championship Week**, and participated in 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*.

### **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 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

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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](http://www.christophercolumbusfoundation.gov).

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