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**Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation Announces Winners of the \$25,000 Columbus Foundation Community Grant and Two Gold Medals in National Science/Community Service Competition Held at Walt Disney World®**

***Winning teams develop public outreach effort to protect honey bee populations, device that helps prevent pipes from freezing, and hyperboloid-shaped house to withstand earthquakes.***

WASHINGTON, D.C.—June 17, 2014—Bright ideas, solid research, and teamwork won three teams of middle-school students top prizes 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 Claudia Button, Nathan Button, Kate Fitzpatrick, and Maria Melissaris, from Tyncastle Academy in Banner Elk, N.C., and their coach, Jenny Fitzpatrick, made it to the finals last month, and now are winners of the grand prize—the **\$25,000 Columbus Foundation Community Grant**.

Known as the **Bee Aware Team**, the students 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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Students Ian Coolidge, Peter Szczeszynski, and Steven Szczeszynski, from STEM Enrichment in Hollis, N.H., and their coach, Kirsten Szczeszynski, won a Gold Medal and a \$2,000 scholarship for each team member for their entry. The **Pipe Savers Team** 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.

Students Julie Bray, Luke Clay, and Ashton Cofer, from Gahanna Middle School East in Gahanna, Ohio, and their coach, Haruna Cofer, also won a Gold Medal and a \$2,000 scholarship for each team member for their entry. The **Hyperboloid House Team** 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.

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

### **Teams Win 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

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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 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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