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Chicago-area Team Wins Champion's Award 2nd Place at *FIRST* LEGO® League World Festival

Eighty Four Teams from 27 Countries Compete at the Georgia Dome for *FIRST* LEGO® League's 10th Season

Competition started months ago with over 100,000 boys and girls ages 9-14 from 13,700 teams in 49 countries. Team STEELE wins second highest honor in the world.

Kildeer, Illinois -- May 1, 2009. After months of research, programming, practice, competitions, and even fundraising, the six young men who make up Team STEELE returned victorious from the *FIRST* LEGO® League (FLL) World Festival with the Champions Award. Eighty-four teams from 27 countries earned the right to compete in Atlanta on April 15-18, 2009.

Team STEELE (which stands for Superbly Tenacious Engineers Exuding LEGO Excellence) is made up of Ryan Cushman (Wauconda), Barrett Kaufman (Lake Zurich), Alexander Meyer (Kildeer), Zachary Kaufman (Lake Zurich), Dylan Antonides (Wauconda), and Caleb Schiller (Hoffman Estates). They were one of 13,700 teams who started the global competition months ago and ended up winning the Champion's Award 2nd place this year.

The Champion's Award is the most prestigious award that a team can win. It celebrates the ultimate success of the *FIRST* mission and FLL Core Values. It measures how the children inspire and motivate others about the excitement and wonders of science and technology while demonstrating Gracious Professionalism. The Champion's Award is determined by giving equal weight to all four areas of competition: robot performance, research project, teamwork, and robot design. Additional consideration is given for how well the team demonstrates FLL Core Values to all of the judges.

The top three teams are presented with a Champion's Award. "Da Peeps" from Michigan won first place honors, with Team STEELE capturing 2nd place and "NXT Generation" taking 3rd place honors back home to Denmark.

"We are so proud of the guys," said Becky Meyer, one of the adult team coaches. "They have worked hard for many months, learning invaluable lessons about teamwork, science, and technology."

"It was a true honor to even get to the World Festival," said Sara Kaufman, one of the other adult coaches. "Winning the Champion's Award is an achievement these guys will never forget!"

"In addition to winning the Champion's Award, my favorite part was meeting people from countries all over the world," said Zachary Kaufman. "We met teams from Singapore, Denmark, Chile, Brazil, Spain, and more!"

"One of the highlights was having our best robot table performance of the entire competitive year during the world championship," said Barrett Kaufman. Earlier this season the team won top Technical honors in the Regional Competition and the highest Programming Award for the state of Illinois.

FIRST, which stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology", was founded by Dean Kamen "to create a world where science and technology are celebrated...where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes."

"Our mission is about more than building robots; we are working to inspire and change a culture," says Kamen, who is probably best known to the public for inventing the self-balancing human transporter called the Segway. "Over the past few days in Atlanta, we had the opportunity to witness this culture shift in action. We watched as the innovators of tomorrow showed us they could step up to the challenge and solve complex technological problems. And that's good news for us because we need more innovative thinkers to help solve a number of increasingly complex problems in the world."

FLL is a global program geared toward ages 9 to 14 (up to 16 outside of the U.S. and Canada). FLL uses theme-based challenges to engage children in research, problem-solving, and engineering. The cornerstones of the program are its Core Values, which emphasize contributions of others, friendly competition, learning, and community involvement.

"One of my favorite things about FLL is that you are forced to learn skills such as time management. There is so much you can take out of FLL that is necessary to succeed in the 'real world'" said Dylan Antonides.

This year's challenge was called Climate Connections. Each team around the globe was required to research and identify a climate-related problem in their local area. Team STEELE chose the impact of weather on Chicago-area roads. Their research included

interactions with the Lake Zurich Public Works department, Illinois Department of Transportation, the Public Works of Australia, and the Department of Transportation in Sweden.

To present their research and recommendations Team STEELE created an entertaining 5 minute skit entitled FIVEBUCKS PHD. Their presentation received highest marks at the world championship for creative presentation and innovative solution. The team presented their findings to the Lake Zurich Village Board last November.

“One of our challenges was raising the necessary funds to compete in the World Festival,” said Ryan Cushman. “We are very thankful for the many people and organizations in our local area that provided financial support and encouragement.”

“In particular we thank Shoreline Sand Solutions for being our title sponsor,” said Alexander Meyer. “Other major sponsors include Plote, Wauconda Guns and Hoses, Berger Excavating, Group Administrators, Robert Taylor, and Volo Storage,” added Caleb Schiller. A full list of sponsors is available on the team’s website at <http://www.i-leadonline.com/Teamsteele/world-festival.htm>.

INSciTE Illinois (<http://insciteillinois.org/>) was also very helpful to the team in preparing and fundraising for the World Festival event.

“It was a real joy to watch these young men grow in their ability to solve problems and collaborate on solutions,” said technical mentor Roger Williams. “This is a very special group of guys.”

ABOUT *FIRST*

Accomplished inventor Dean Kamen founded *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) 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, the *FIRST* LEGO League for children 9-14 years old, and the Junior *FIRST* LEGO League for 6 to 9 year olds. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

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