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FIRST™ AERIAL ASSIST℠ 2014 Robotics Game Unveiled

AERIAL ASSIST℠ Game Revealed to Nearly 70,000 High-School Students Worldwide at the 2014 FIRST Robotics Competition Season Kickoff

SAN DIEGO, CA, January 4, 2013 - Inventor and FIRST Founder Dean Kamen launched the 2014 FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) season today with the Kickoff of a new robotics game called AERIAL ASSIST℠ to nearly 70,000 high-school students on more than 2,700 teams in 92 cities around the globe via live NASA-TV broadcast and webcast. Nearly 400 San Diego high school students on FRC teams convened at the San Diego Kickoff Event at Kearny High School were they shown the AERIAL ASSIST playing field and received a Kit of Parts made up of motors, batteries, a control system, a PC, and a mix of automation components – and only limited instructions.

Working with adult Mentors, students will have only six weeks to design, build, program, and test their robots to meet the season's engineering challenge. The Stop Build deadline is on February 18th at midnight. Once these young inventors build a robot, their teams will participate in one or more of the 98 Regional and District competitions that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of collaboration, and the determination of students. San Diego teams will compete in the 2014 game, AERIAL ASSIST, at the 8th Annual San Diego FIRST Robotics Competition held at the Valley View Casino Center (formerly Sports Arena) on March 6-8, 2014.

AERIAL ASSIST is played by two Alliances of three teams each. Alliances compete by trying to score as many balls in goals as possible during a two-minute and 30-second match. Additional points are earned by robots working together to score goals, and by throwing and catching balls over a truss suspended just over five feet above the floor as they move the ball down the field. The AERIAL ASSIST game animation can be found here.

"The students who participate in the FIRST Robotics Competition are not only building robots; they are building character, self-respect, and relationships with their peers," said Dean Kamen, president of DEKA Research & Development and FIRST Founder, adding, "Winning the game is fun, but the importance of FIRST is that you'll get much more out of it than you put in, and it's going to change the rest of your life."

"This is more than a game. This experience highlights what you will do in your careers," said

John M. Grunsfeld, Associate Administrator for the Science Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters. “Experience in this competition is similar in many ways to how we design, build, and test NASA robots.”

Sponsored by NASA and Needham, Mass.-based PTC, the 2014 FIRST Robotics Competition Kickoff event is an opportunity for teams from all over the world to come together as a community to share in the excitement of seeing the new game unveiled. Teams at local Kickoffs in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Israel, Mexico, and the U.S. watched the proceedings via NASA-TV and were offered workshops and a chance to meet other teams.

“Through FIRST, you’re engaged in a neck-and-neck technology race with us professionals,” said Jim Heppelmann, President and Chief Executive Officer of PTC. “Think of what that experience means; the jobs you can get, the careers you can develop, the problems you’ll solve, the money you’ll make, and the fun you’re going to have. What a special program and special opportunity FIRST is. The 6,000 employees of PTC are proud to sponsor this event and proud to be a Strategic Partner of FIRST.”

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 support from over 200 of the Fortune 500 companies and more than $18 million in college scholarships, the not-for-profit organization hosts the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) for students in Grades 9-12; FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) for Grades 7-12; FIRST LEGO League (FLL) for Grades 4-8; and Junior FIRST LEGO League (Jr.FLL) for Grades K-3. Gracious Professionalism is a way of doing things that encourages high-quality work, emphasizes the value of others, and respects individuals and the community. To learn more about FIRST, go to www.usfirst.org.

The FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) is an annual competition that helps students to discover the excitement of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) and the rewards a career in STEM can bring. Approximately 68,000 high-school students from 17 countries will participate in the 2014 competition. In 1992, the FIRST Robotics Competition began with 28 teams and a single 14-by-14-foot playing field in a New Hampshire high-school gym. This season, a projected 2,720 teams – including 392 rookie teams – will participate. Fifty-four Regional competitions in the U.S., Canada, Israel, and Mexico, plus 40 District competitions, and four Qualifying Championship events, will culminate at the 2014 FIRST Championship at the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis, April 23-26. FIRST programs are spearheaded by more than 130,000 dedicated Volunteers worldwide, most of them professional engineers, scientists, and teachers who mentor the next generation of innovators.