Inaugural Vex Robotics World Championship Competition Announced

Students will compete with robots created from the VEX(R) Robotics Design System(TM)

Website

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 12 /PRNewswire/ -- More than 1,000 high school students from across the globe will join together to compete in the inaugural Vex Robotics World Championship competition, playing the game "Bridge Battle" developed by Innovation First, Inc., at California State University, Northridge on May 2-3, 2008. Winning teams from Vex Robotics Bridge Battle local and state competitions will be invited to participate in the World Championship along with 30 winning teams from the Asian Robotics League (ARL) Bridge Battle competition. Additionally, top teams from other competitions using the Vex Robotics Design System, including the FIRST Tech Challenge Quad Quandary and the Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) Savage Soccer Vex- based competitions will be invited to participate.

"The Bridge Battle game provides students with a fun and challenging robotics competition that is easily accessible and extremely affordable to all schools," said Jason Morrella, senior director of education and competition at Innovation First. "Many groups in the U.S., Canada, Asia, Europe and South America have contacted us about organizing quality Vex Robotics based competitions for their local schools and students. The demand for a Vex Robotics World Championship event was very clear and we are excited to support an event that will allow students to compete with teams from all over the world and test their robotics engineering skills."

Two of the primary partners collaborating to sponsor the inaugural event and Team Party with Innovation First are Autodesk, Inc., the world leader in 2D and 3D design software for the manufacturing, building and construction and media and entertainment markets and California State University, Northridge, who will host the competition. Additionally, Autodesk is supporting every participating team with a grant that will reduce the event registration fee from $300 to $100 per team.

"Vex Robotics Competitions have given students a hands-on tool to enhance their science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education and learn critical skills such as teamwork, collaboration, critical thinking, professionalism and problem-solving," said Tarek Shraibati, a professor at California State University, Northridge and a member of the committee which organizes local robotics competitions. "Winning teams from various Vex programs around the country, and the world, deserve the chance to celebrate their accomplishments and compete with each other. California State University, Northridge decided to help organize and run a Vex World Championship event that would invite all the top teams from various competitions that use Vex Robotics."

While robotics has increased in popularity among today's students at both the secondary and post-secondary level, with hundreds of different U.S. events and competitions taking place in 2007 alone; only five to ten percent of schools take advantage of these programs. Vex Robotics Competitions, like Bridge Battle, are designed to give more students the chance to learn about STEM education and help foster the next generation of future engineers.

"Team Spyder is honored and excited to be competing in the first ever Vex Robotics World Championship," said Todd Parr, teacher and Vex team coach at Poway High School. "Our students were part of the winning alliance at a FIRST Tech Challenge Championship, but were very disappointed to learn they had not qualified to go to the FTC Championship in Atlanta. The students are so excited to now have this opportunity to move on to play with and against all the top Vex Robotics teams in the world."

Participants in the Vex Robotics World Championship will include teams from countries in Asia, Europe, South America along with teams from Canada and many states in the U.S. such as Michigan, California, Hawaii and Indiana.

The game, Bridge Battle, was created by Innovation First, a leader in educational and competitive robotics products,

at the request of robot competition organizers to engage students in the fun and excitement of science and technology. Bridge Battle, a tournament that is affordable to host and easy to implement is played on a 12'x12' square field that is divided into two sections -- one "red" and one "blue" -- with two teams on each side. Each team controls its robots to place tennis balls in respective red and blue colored sections of a bridge platform and works closely together to accomplish this task.

Any organization interested in hosting a robotics event of any scale can download the Bridge Battle game and rules free of charge from http://www.vexrobotics.com.

More information about the Vex Robotics World Championship is available at http://www.robotevents.com.

About Innovation First, Inc.

Innovation First, a privately held corporation, was founded on the belief that innovation very early in the design process is necessary to produce simple and elegant product designs. Innovation First began producing electronics for unmanned mobile ground robots, and is now an industry leader in the hobby, competition and education markets. The company's award-winning Vex Robotics Design System VEXplorer, HEXBUG Micro Robotic Creatures, and IFI Robotics span the education, consumer and business-to-business markets. Leveraging the company's core competency in electrical and mechanical engineering, the RackSolutions division works closely with all major computer OEMs to provide custom mounting solutions and industry-wide rack compatibility for data installations of all sizes. With an advanced in-house metal fabrication plant, distribution center, and offices located together in a 13 acre complex in Greenville, Texas, the company is poised to continue on a rapid growth path. Please visit http://www.innovationfirst.com for additional information.

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