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## NU *FIRST* Conn. Regional robotics competition to be held April 1-2

**HARTFORD, Connecticut** – The Northeast Utilities *FIRST* Connecticut Regional robotics competition will be held Friday and Saturday, April 1-2 at the Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard in Hartford. The event will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on both days and *is free and open to the public*.

The competition has been held for the past seventeen years in Hartford, with the past six years at the Connecticut Convention Center. This year, 58 teams of students, teachers and mentors from five states – and one returning team from Brazil – will operate remote controlled robots they designed and built in an arena competition. The winners of the regional will advance to the *FIRST* International Championship Event in St. Louis, Missouri, on April 28-30.

“It’s not about the robots,” said *FIRST* founder Dean Kamen. “It’s much bigger than that. It’s about building self-confidence, respect, and important relationships with people who invent new technologies and work to make the future better than the past.”

The event and many teams are also supported by numerous sponsors, including title sponsor the Northeast Utilities Foundation. “We’re proud to support *FIRST* and its mission of inspiring young people’s passion for science and technology,” said Shirley Payne, the foundation’s president and executive director. “It’s just another way we can contribute to the development of the next generation of achievers in science, technology, engineering and math.”

“The *FIRST* program assists the students in developing skills that will apply in the work environment,” said event chairman Michael Sperber, a program manager at Hamilton Sundstrand. “Students have the opportunity within their teams to work with professional engineers and learn various skills such as engineering, design, communication, finance, and project management. The program provides an excellent training ground for tomorrow’s technically literate workforce. It also provides networking opportunities for the students with future employers.”

Students and their adult mentors had six weeks to build, program and test their robots to meet the season’s engineering challenge. Beginning in January, they were given a kit of parts (motors, batteries, a control system, a computer, and a mix of automation components), but no instructions. Then they were tasked to create an engineering solution for a specific challenge. Once these young inventors create a robot, their teams participate in competitions that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of collaboration, and the determination of students.

In this year's challenge, called "LOGO MOTION<sup>®</sup>," two alliances of three teams will compete on a 27-by-54-foot field with poles, attempting to earn points by hanging as many triangle, circle and square inner-tubes as possible. Bonus points will be earned for each robot that can hang and assemble logo pieces to form the *FIRST* logo. Robots can also earn extra points by deploying Mini-Bots to climb vertical poles. The teams will also compete for honors and recognition that reward design excellence, safety, creativity, and sportsmanship, and outreach toward schools, area businesses, and their communities.

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, New Hampshire, *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 (FRC) and *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC) for high-school students, *FIRST* LEGO<sup>®</sup> League (FLL) for children 9-14 years old, and Junior *FIRST* LEGO<sup>®</sup> League (Jr.FLL) for 6 to 9 year-olds.

The Northeast Utilities *FIRST* Connecticut Regional is the oldest and longest continually running *FIRST* event in New England. It is organized by volunteers from some of the most highly regarded organizations in the area, including The Northeast Utilities Foundation, United Technologies Corporation, ING, and Stanley Black & Decker who also provide major funding. It also receives generous contributions from Pfizer, Ensign-Bickford, General Dynamics - Electric Boat and Burns & McDonnell as well as support from the Connecticut Science Center, the MetroHartford Alliance, the Connecticut Technology Council, the Connecticut Association of Schools, 4-H, and the Connecticut Business and Industry Association. These organizations provide valuable resources including time and talent from professional mentors, services, equipment, financial contributions, and volunteers.

This event will be broadcast live through a webcast. For additional information about the *FIRST* Connecticut Regional Competition and the webcast, visit <http://www.ctfirst.org/frc/>. Additional information about the *FIRST* robotics program can be found by visiting [www.usfirst.org](http://www.usfirst.org).

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