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**NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 24, 2011**

(Release #2011 - 135)

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**Houston County Robotics Team Wins Awards**



HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – The Houston County Alliance FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Team competed at the FIRST Regional Competition in Duluth, Ga. The team was awarded the 2011 Highest Rookie Seed Award for the best performance of all the rookie teams. Houston County’s team consists of students from all six high schools.

Ten students, six mentors, and three teachers traveled to the competition this past weekend to compete in 10 qualifying matches. They finished the competition overall in 21<sup>st</sup> place out of 48 participating teams from all over the Southeast.

Houston County’s team had 16 area mentors and was sponsored by J.C. Penney, NASA, SRI and the Houston County Board of Education.

Regional competition participants from the Houston County team are pictured: (front row, from left) Veterans High Science Teacher Chris Smith; Houston County High student Dalton Spearman; Veterans High student Brandy Boggs; (second row) Veterans High student Logan Hammond; Northside High student Nicholi Hewitt; Northside High student Richard Odom; (back row) Northside High student Jevontre Collier; Houston County Career Academy Engineering, Manufacturing, and Electronics Teacher Jimmie Fouts; Northside High student Nikki Roth; Northside High student Kevin Long; Northside High student Kevin Whitest; Robins Air Force Base Engineer and Mentor Brian Fleming; and Warner Robins High student Marcus Colson. Eight of the 10 participating students at the Regional Competition are also part-time students in the engineering program at the Houston County Career Academy.

FIRST was founded in 1989 to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology. The FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) is a “varsity sport for the mind” designed to help high school students discover the interesting and rewarding work of engineers and researchers. The

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competition challenges teams of young people and their mentors to solve a common problem in a six-week timeframe using a standard kit and a common set of rules. Teams build robots from the parts using their own design and enter them in competitions.

In Georgia, 30+ high school teams participate in the FRC. Teams come from around the state, as well as many surrounding states, to compete each year at the Peachtree Regional event held at the Gwinnett Center in Duluth. This is the groundbreaking year of Houston County's involvement. Teachers Smith and Fouts coordinated the Houston County Alliance Team, with the help of more than 15 engineer mentors from Robins Air Force Base and supporting companies, teachers and 17 students from the six high schools.

The goals of the Houston County Robotics Team include:

1. Involving students early in the mechanical and programming problems to be solved as a team by working with robot mechanics, electronic systems, and programming.
2. Students are in "fluid" teams, working on problems and puzzles requiring creative solutions even before organizing them into the different component teams for the robot construction.
3. Parent involvement is desired with a plan to begin a mini-booster club to extend access to community resources.
4. Reaching out to students not only interested in engineering, but also CTAE students who enjoy using wrenches, soldering, wiring and other practical skills.

To support the team, grants from both J.C. Penny and NASA were awarded in the amount of \$6,500 each. The grant awards supplied the initial funds to purchase the robotic kit, which the team received at the FIRST Robotics Kickoff at Georgia Tech on Jan. 8, 2011. The team had six weeks to build the robot. Students, teachers and mentors met on Tuesday and Thursday evenings for two hours and on Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. during this six-week period to design, build and program their unique robot to perform the particular skills required for this year's competition. The robot was then shipped to Duluth on Feb. 22, and the team traveled to the Gwinnett Civic Center for the Peachtree Regional Competition March 17-19, 2011.

Many colleges and universities, professional associations and corporations offer college scholarships to students on FIRST teams. In 2011, more than 140 scholarship providers are making available over 900 individual scholarship opportunities with a total value of greater than \$14 million.

For more information, contact Fouts or Smith at [Jimmie.Fouts@hcbe.net](mailto:Jimmie.Fouts@hcbe.net) or [Chris.Smith@hcbe.net](mailto:Chris.Smith@hcbe.net) respectively, or visit <http://www.usfirst.org/>

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