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# *FIRST* UNVEILS NEW ROBOTICS PLATFORM FOR 2008 *FIRST* TECH CHALLENGE SEASON

*New system provides sustainable, scaleable and affordable bridge between FIRST LEGO® League and FIRST Robotics Competition*

**ATLANTA, April 17, 2008** – *FIRST* (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), an organization founded by inventor Dean Kamen to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology, today revealed its new robotics platform for the 2008 *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC) season. The presentation and preview demonstration were made to attendees of the 2008 *FIRST* Championship at the Georgia Dome.

FTC is an accessible, affordable robotics competition designed for high-school-aged students. Each fall teams of up to ten students compete at high-energy regional tournaments where the students, collaborating with mentors, must apply math and science concepts to solve the annual challenge. Designed to provide more real-world relevance for participants, the new FTC starter system consists of a TETRIX metal robot structure kit, LEGO® MINDSTORMS™ NXT robotics kit, servomotors, controllers, advanced sensors and LEGO NXT, NXTG, LabView for FTC, and RobotC programming software.

During the 2008 season, which begins September 2008, teams will use the new FTC competition kit. Twelve showcase teams will participate in a pilot event at this year's World Championship in Atlanta to demonstrate the new kit's capabilities. Teams can find more detail about the platform components, including pricing and availability, at www.usfirst.org.

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"*FIRST* now offers a powerful continuum of programs to inspire kids of all ages to discover the excitement and creativity of science and technology. Each program meets the needs of a particular age group by presenting teams with an engineering challenge and providing a robotics kit with age-appropriate technology and materials," said *FIRST* founder Dean Kamen. "By working with our partners at Carnegie Mellon University, HiTechnic, The LEGO Group, National Instruments and Pitsco, *FIRST* is now able to provide FTC students with an engineering challenge that is more real-world and a robotics experience that is higher quality, more rewarding, and ultimately, more fun."

"For ten years we have been honored to support the *FIRST* LEGO and Junior *FIRST* LEGO League challenges to inspire the creative thinking of children around the world," said Jens Maibom, vice president LEGO Education. "Today more than ever, it is essential that we develop hands-on, minds-on experiences both inside and out of the classroom to engage children and help them become builders of tomorrow. We are proud to partner with National Instruments and *FIRST* to extend this proven approach into the newly redesigned FTC program."

"We must inspire today's students to become tomorrow's engineers and scientists. *FIRST* offers industry and academia alike the opportunity to get students of all ages excited about math, science and technology," said Ray Almgren, vice president of academic relations at National Instruments. "Through the collaboration of *FIRST*, LEGO and National Instruments, we are providing students with the latest technology that real-world scientists and engineers are using in their applications and that helps students grow and nurture their passion for learning."

During the 2007 season, approximately 800 FTC teams competed at events in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. FTC participants are eligible to apply for approximately seven million dollars in scholarship funds from some of the finest science and engineering colleges and universities in the country.

**Growing Up with *FIRST***

Sixteen years ago, the initial *FIRST* Robotics Competition took place with 28 teams in a high school gym in New Hampshire. With the unwavering support of corporate sponsors and a global community of teacher, mentor and parent volunteers, *FIRST's* four robotics programs now serve more than 150,000 children around the world. Children are eligible for the program at age six, but can enter at any point afterwards and may participate all the way up to high school graduation.

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- The ***FIRST* Robotics Competition** (FRC) combines the excitement of sport with science and technology to create a unique varsity sport for the mind. FRC helps high school students discover the rewarding and engaging process of innovation and engineering by challenging them to work with professional mentors to design and build a robot, and compete in high-intensity events that measure the effectiveness of each robot, the power of team strategy and collaboration, and the determination of students.
- The revised ***FIRST* Tech Challenge** provides an intermediate robotics competition that offers high-school-aged students the traditional challenge of FRC, but with a more accessible and affordable robotics kit.
- Celebrating its tenth anniversary, the ***FIRST* LEGO® League** (FLL) asks kids, 9 to 14, to use the LEGO MINDSTORMS™ NXT robotics platform to solve real-world engineering challenges facing today's scientists. More than 10,600 teams of ten children participated in the 2007 Power Puzzle Challenge.
- **Junior *FIRST* LEGO® League** (JFLL) introduces kids, 6 to 9, to the wonders of science and technology with a challenge based on the same real-world theme as FLL. FLL and JFLL are a result of a partnership between *FIRST* and The LEGO Group. Junior *FIRST* LEGO League (JFLL) is an exciting opportunity for the youngest budding scientists. It encompasses the core concepts of all *FIRST* programs to inspire, excite, and introduce kids to the wonders of science, technology, and engineering.

**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, *FIRST* LEGO League for children 9-14 years old, and Junior *FIRST* LEGO League for 6 to 9 year-olds. To learn more about *FIRST*, go to www.usfirst.org.

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