

4-H: Preparing Today's Youth To Become Engineers Of Tomorrow

(NAPSA)—4-H set a new record in 2012, celebrating the fourth year of its robotics program with 21 teams competing in the national *FIRST* Championship.

The event culminates after six weeks of building, engineering and designing robots to play in games created by *FIRST*. The event brings together teamwork, sports and technology for thousands of high school youth.

With support from jcpenny and Lockheed Martin, 4-H has established 87 *FIRST* Robotics teams over four years in cities such as Atlanta, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City and West Palm Beach. From urban to suburban, 4-H youth in *FIRST* Robotics come from incredibly diverse backgrounds to join a shared passion for engineering.

That passion earned Scott Brenneman and the 4-H Techno-Clovers of Accident, Md., second place overall.

"I love this because there are so many things that can be done and discovered with robots," Brenneman said.

Nationwide, nearly 5 million 4-H youth each year participate in hands-on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning experiences like robotics through afterschool programming, in-school enrichment programs and camps. With the launch of the 4-H Robotics Curriculum, those youth have the opportunity to begin exploring STEM year-round.

"We are proud of our 4-H youth who stepped up to robotics, and devoted their time and talents in the name of engineering," said Donald T. Floyd Jr., National 4-H Council president and CEO. "Their success is a testament to 4-H's efforts to address the nation's scientific workforce development



Members of the 4-H Techno-Clovers (center) direct their robot (number 4240) during the final round of competition at the 2012 *FIRST* Championship. There are nearly 100 4-H teams across the country now involved in competitive robotics.

challenges by expanding our STEM programming, sparking an early interest in the sciences and providing an environment where young people can discover the possibilities of pursuing degrees and careers in science."

The early introduction to STEM among 4-H'ers is key, according to a study by Tufts University. Through activities like robotics, youth in 4-H have better grades and higher levels of academic competence; are two times more likely to excel in STEM; and are more interested in pursuing science careers.

"In order for our country to succeed tomorrow, we have to make critical investments in the technological education of our youth today," Floyd said. "From food insecurity to environmental issues, many of the solutions to society's problems will be solved with STEM. At 4-H, we want to be sure we are doing what we can to train those who will find the solutions to those problems."