



Innovation First, Inc. and Autodesk Launch Web Site to Promote Robotics Among Students and Educators

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Robotevents.com provides comprehensive online resource offering the latest robotics news, blogs, events and information for robotics enthusiasts

SAN JOSE, Calif., Oct. 8 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- In an effort to promote greater interest in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) in schools across the globe, Innovation First, Inc., a leader in educational and competitive robotics products, has teamed up with Autodesk, Inc. (Nasdaq: ADSK), the world leader in 2D and 3D design software for the manufacturing, building and construction, and media and entertainment markets, to launch Robotevents.com. The new Web site is designed to encourage students and educators to explore the exciting world of robotics and bring real-world experience to STEM learning.

(Logo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20050415/SFF034LOGO>)

Robotevents.com is a comprehensive online resource that brings together information from many of the pioneers in the educational robotics community. Robotevents.com will give users the unprecedented ability to locate and register for top robotics and technology competitions by geography and date, including BEST Robotics Competition, Botball Education Robotics Program, FIRST Lego League, FIRST Robotics Competition, FIRST Tech Challenge and VEX Robotics Competitions. Robotevents.com will be updated daily with information on new events.

Other site features include news and information on industry conferences, camps and workshops focused on technology and professional development for educators. Educators interested in implementing robotics programs in the classroom will be able to access curriculum such as the NASA Robotics Alliance Project and other resources. Visitors will also be able to access robotics blogs and online forums, and view the latest designs in a variety of robot galleries. The site will also feature a "cool robot of the week."

"There are many fantastic robotics programs out there -- from elementary all the way to college level," said Jason Morrella, senior director of education and competition at Innovation First. "However, only five to 10 percent of schools take advantage of these programs. Robotevents.com is our way of spreading the word about these great programs in a way that is easy to understand and navigate. We hope more young people can discover robotics programs, explore the possibilities of STEM through an entirely new perspective and have a great time during the process."

Robotics has increased in popularity among today's students at both the secondary and post-secondary level, with more than 450 events and competitions taking place in 2006 alone. A recent study shows that 89 percent of students who participated in robotics activities better understood the role of science and technology in their everyday life, while 69 percent said that learning about robotics made them more interested in science and technology careers*. In addition to helping students develop STEM skills, robotics also promotes the development of critical skills such as teamwork, collaboration, critical thinking, professionalism and problem-solving.

The Innovation First team brings a combined 129 years of experience providing robotics programs to students and educators and serves more than 140,000 students, representing 12,000 teams around the world. Robotevents.com is part of Innovation First and Autodesk's ongoing commitment to foster the next generation of engineering professionals. The partnership is an extension of Autodesk's support of robotics, which during the past 16 years, has included a contribution of approximately \$89 million of software and training to support participants of the FIRST Robotics competitions.

"We are excited to partner with Innovation First to inspire students and educators to explore the exciting world of robotics," said Paul Mailhot, senior director of worldwide education programs for Autodesk. "With the present shortage of engineers worldwide, robotics is a highly effective way to engage students of all ages in engineering, get them excited about STEM, and prepare them for future academic and professional success."

"I was blown away by the features of Robotevents.com," said George Blanks of the BEST Board of Directors and director of K-12 Engineering Outreach at Auburn University. "As a volunteer-based initiative, this new site, along with the registration system, will help us promote and grow our program in ways we only dreamed were possible -- all the while reaching more schools and teams with a more professional, consistent, higher-quality and improved experience."

Autodesk encourages Robotevents.com visitors to join the Autodesk Student Engineering and Design Community to download free* student versions of popular 2D and 3D design software, including Autodesk Inventor software, which is used by professional robotics engineers throughout the world. A link to the Autodesk online community can be found on the Robotevents.com homepage.

Any secondary or post-secondary student or educator with a valid education email address can join the Autodesk Student Engineering and Design Community by logging on to <http://www.autodesk.com/edcommunity>.

Students and educators can start exploring the world of robotics today at <http://www.robotevents.com>.

About Innovation First, Inc.

Innovation First, Inc., a privately held S 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, Inc. 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. Innovation First's staff are unmatched in their experience in supporting and running educational and competitive robotics competitions. 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.

About Autodesk Education

Autodesk is committed to supporting students and educators by providing access to powerful 2D and 3D design software, innovative programs and resources designed to inspire the next generation of professionals to experience their ideas before they're real. By advancing education in the key areas of science, technology, engineering, math and visual communications, Autodesk is helping students develop critical skills for future academic and career success. Autodesk supports schools and institutions of higher learning worldwide through substantial discounts, subscriptions, grant programs, training, curricula development and community resources. For more information about Autodesk education programs and solutions, visit <http://www.autodesk.com/education>.

About Autodesk

Autodesk, Inc. is the world leader in 2D and 3D design software for the manufacturing, building and construction, and media and entertainment markets. Since its introduction of AutoCAD software in 1982, Autodesk has developed the broadest portfolio of state-of-the-art digital prototyping solutions to help customers experience their ideas before they are real. Fortune 1000 companies rely on Autodesk for the tools to visualize, simulate and analyze real-world performance early in the design process to save time and money, enhance quality and foster innovation. For additional information about Autodesk, visit <http://www.autodesk.com>.

* American Society for Engineering Education, "ASEE Announces Newly Improved K-12 Outreach Program Database," American Society for Engineering Education (April, 2006).

*Free products are subject to the terms and conditions of the end-user license agreement that accompanies download of the software.

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