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News Release

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Hartford Students Win Regional Robotics Competition; Move on to Nationals in Atlanta April 12-14

(April 3, 2007) – For the first time in its 10-year history, Hartford Public Schools’ “Birds of Prey” robotics team has taken first place in regional competition, defeating more than 40 teams that came to Philadelphia March 31-April 1 to do battle. As regional winners, the Birds have been invited to the national competition April 12-14 in Atlanta.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) robotics competition encourages interest in science and technology by challenging high school students to design, build and operate a competitive robot in six weeks. The Philadelphia Regional was one of 37 FIRST competitions throughout the world where over 1,100 high school teams compete.

“Birds of Prey” is a combined team of 35 Hartford high school students from five Hartford high schools: Hartford Public, Weaver, Bulkeley, University High School and Pathways to Technology Magnet School. The team is sponsored by the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft division of United Technologies Corp. and other local area businesses, and is mentored by engineers from Pratt and Whitney, Mazak Corp. and the Connecticut Pre-Engineering Program (CPEP), as well as Hartford Public School teachers and parents.

This year’s contest pitted two, three-robot “alliances” against each other to score the highest number of points by placing inflated inner tubes on 24 “legs” of an eight-foot diameter by 10-foot high “rake” at the center of a 54-by-24-foot playing field.

During its 10-year history, 100% of Birds of Prey team members have completed high school and 95% have gone on to higher education. Several of the team's alumni are now engineers and have returned as team mentors.

Teacher/coach for the “Birds” is John Gaynor, a technology teacher at Pathways to Technology Magnet School.

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