



Contact: Rhonda Epstein
858-481-3727
rhondae@san.rr.com

Or: Stephanie Hallman
Christopher Columbus Awards
800-291-6020
shallman@mmseducation.com

**San Diego, Calif., Middle School Students Win Top Award:
The \$25,000 Stephen J. Moses Community Grant
in National Science/Community Service Competition
Held at Walt Disney World®**

***Students develop device to reduce repetitive stress injuries
related to computer use.***

AUBURN, N.Y.—June 19, 2009—Bright ideas, solid research and teamwork won four students from Carmel Valley Middle School and Santa Fe Christian School, in San Diego, Calif., the top prize in the Christopher Columbus Awards, a nationwide program that challenges middle-school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities.

Seventh-graders Sean Colford, Ethan Epstein, Brandon Loye, and Michael Walsh, and their coach, Rhonda Epstein, made it to the finals last month, and now are winners of the grand prize—the **\$25,000 Stephen J. Moses Community Grant**.

The students were concerned about the growing problem of repetitive stress injuries (RSIs), a group of conditions caused by placing excessive stress or repeated motion on a joint or muscle. RSIs are collectively the number one work-related health problem in the U.S., according to the Occupational Safety and Health Association. The students were particularly interested in RSIs that can result when students and workers maintain poor posture at their computer workstations. These RSIs cause pain, reduce productivity, diminish quality of life, and cost individuals, businesses, and the government millions in insurance and on-the-job injury claims.

The students conducted research online and consulted with several physical therapists as well as the Director of Environmental Health and Safety at Qualcomm to determine what current ergonomic solutions best address the problem of computer-related RSIs. They then set out to create their own solution. The result was the Ergonomic Posture Alignment Device or Ergo-PAD,

-more-

FEATURING THE STEPHEN J. MOSES COMMUNITY GRANT

SPONSORED BY THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS FELLOWSHIP FOUNDATION
105 Terry Drive, Suite 120 · Newtown, PA 18940-3425 · tel: 800-291-6020
fax: 215-579-8589 · email: succes@edumedia.com · www.christophercolumbusaward.com

a specialized seat cushion that uses sensory feedback to train people to develop a healthy posture when sitting at a computer.

A panel of community leaders, scientists and experts in science education selected this idea as one of the top eight entries in the U.S. More than 600 students and coaches participated nationwide.

Team Wins a Trip to Walt Disney World®

The team and their coach won an all-expense-paid trip to the *Walt Disney World®* Resort, where they competed in the **Christopher Columbus Awards' National Championship Week**, and participated in the **Christopher Columbus Academy**, a custom-designed educational program conducted by scientists, engineers and educators. The program reveals the science and technology behind the thrills and excitement of *Epcot®* and the *Magic Kingdom®*.

Positive Community Change

The Christopher Columbus Awards challenge teams of middle-school students to explore and discover opportunities for positive change in their communities using science and technology. The program is now in its 13th year and has attracted nearly 16,000 students from diverse backgrounds all across the U.S. The program is sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation (www.columbusfdn.org), a Federal government agency, and is endorsed by the National Middle School Association.

Past winners have included: a group of Ohio students who developed a plan to use methane gas produced at landfills as an alternative source of energy; a group of Native American girls who built a study hall out of straw on the Crow Indian Reservation in Montana; and a group of students from Pennsylvania who developed a video/motion sensor device for school buses that deters motorists from trying to pass illegally.

Strong Participation from Girls, Minorities

The program attracts many students who may not typically enter a science competition. More than half of the entrants are girls, and more than one-fourth are from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, statistics that are higher than those of most science competitions. The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation believes the teamwork aspect and community focus draw a broader range of students to enter.

About the Sponsor

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is an independent Federal government agency created by Congress in 1992 to encourage and support research, study and labor designed to produce new discoveries in all fields of endeavor for the benefit of mankind. The Foundation has established *Frontiers of Discovery—Work in Progress* and *Discover the Future*, programs that recognize “cutting edge” innovations and innovative ideas of America’s youth, and honor teachers. These programs include *Life Sciences Awards*, the *\$25,000 Homeland Security Award*, *Christopher Columbus Awards*, and the *\$10,000 Freida J. Riley Teacher Award*.

For more information on the Christopher Columbus Awards, call 800-291-6020 or visit www.christophercolumbusawards.com.

###

FEATURING THE STEPHEN J. MOSES COMMUNITY GRANT

SPONSORED BY THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS FELLOWSHIP FOUNDATION
105 Terry Drive, Suite 120 · Newtown, PA 18940-3425 · tel: 800-291-6020
fax: 215-579-8589 · email: succes@edumedia.com · www.christophercolumbusaward.com