



Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation

Thursday, October 21, 2010

Contact: Judi Shellenberger (315) 730-6353

FEDERAL FOUNDATION INVITED TO EXHIBIT AT FIRST WHITE HOUSE SCIENCE FAIR

October 18, 2010 Washington, D.C. – Today President Obama hosted the first White House Science Fair, and a team sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation was among 15 teams to exhibit their inventions and projects.

The **\$25,000 Columbus Foundation Community Grant** winning team in the 2010 **Christopher Columbus Awards** was chosen to display its invention, **Arthritis Magic**, a device which allows those suffering from the affects of arthritis to open doors more easily using a pulling motion rather than a twisting motion.

"The team's idea is simplistic in design, and ingenious in its practicality," said Kimberly Owens, Chair of the Foundation. "Not only can **Arthritis Magic** be used on any type of doorknob, but it is portable, so it can literally be used on **any** doorknob!"

The team of three--Mary Chiang, Gul Shaheen and Thomas Wiygul, all now in 9th grade, were eighth graders at Madison Middle School, Madison, Mississippi, when they won the \$25,000 grant in June. The team, along with their coach Nancy Rubel, will work with the Foundation over the coming year to turn their idea into reality. The team will perfect their invention with the intent of having it available to arthritis sufferers around the country. The team has received a provisional patent on its invention and has chosen the Arthritis Foundation Southeastern Region, Inc., as its community partner.

James Herring, Vice Chairman of the Foundation said, "This team of inventive students proved once again that if you set your mind on something and you work hard, good things can and will happen, and people will recognize your efforts. This has happened time and time again with the thousands of students that participate in the **Christopher Columbus Awards**, a competition open to all middle schools students across the nation."

The team not only had the thrill of displaying their invention in the White House and shaking hands with President Obama, they were awe struck by the other celebrities in attendance. The students had a photo op with Dr. Subra Suresh, the newly sworn-in Director of the National Science Foundation, and discussed their project with Myth Busters--Jamie Hyneman and

- M O R E -

Adam Savage, as well as Bill Nye the "Science Guy," and Dean Kamen, Founder of FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology).

- 2 -

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, now in its 15th year, has attracted more than 18,000 students from diverse backgrounds all across the United States. For more information, please visit the website at: www.christophercolumbusawards.com. The program is endorsed by the National Middle School Association.

Finalist Teams

Eight finalist teams and their coaches win an all-expense-paid trip to Orlando, Florida, to compete in **National Championship Week**. There, they participate in the **Christopher Columbus Academy**, a custom-designed educational program at Walt Disney World®, where they work with scientists, engineers and educators. The Academy programs reveals the science and technology behind the thrills and excitement of Epcot® and the Magic Kingdom®.

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.

Sponsor

The **Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation** is an independent Federal government agency established 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.” Governed by a Presidential appointed Board of Trustees, the Foundation has established *Frontiers of Discovery—Work in Progress and Discover the Future* programs that recognize “cutting edge” innovations, innovative ideas of America’s youth, and honors teachers. These programs include the *Agriscience Awards*, *Homeland Security Awards*, *Life Sciences Awards* and *Christopher Columbus Awards*. Please visit: www.columbusfdn.org, www.agriscienceawards.com and www.ccolumbusfoundationawards.org for more information on each program.



Judi Shellenberger, Foundation Executive Director, Thomas Wiygul, Dr. Subra Suresh, NSF Director, Mary Chiang and Gul Shaheen

###