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**Project Developed by Mont Vernon Middle-School Students
Wins Gold Medal in National Science/Community Service
Competition Held at Walt Disney World®**

Students develop web-based software that allows parents to modify their child's school transportation plans.

AUBURN, N.Y.—June 24, 2011—Bright ideas, solid research and teamwork won four students from Mont Vernon, N.H., a Gold Medal and a \$2,000 Savings Bond in the Christopher Columbus Awards, a nationwide program that challenges middle-school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities.

Seventh-graders Brian Apple, Anthony Edvalson, and Rylee Noorda; sixth-grader Bryan Rose; and their coach, Maria Edvalson, made it to the finals last month by developing a secure, convenient way for parents to alter their children's transportation arrangements from school.

Through observation and personal experience, the team identified a problem that affects many schools on an everyday basis—the hassle of making a change to a student's transportation arrangement after school. The current system, in which a parent sends in a note or phones the school, creates extra work, last-minute stress, and numerous opportunities for miscommunication anywhere along the line from student to teacher to school staff. Any errors can lead to a potentially unsafe situation, with a student ending up in the wrong place after school.

To figure out how to solve this problem, the students interviewed a principal, several teachers and other school staff members, parents, and a school board member to learn more about their own experiences with this issue and their ideas for improving the communication process. They also consulted the Internet and student handbooks from other schools to determine whether solutions already existed to streamline the process. They found none. The only "solution" some schools have instituted is to eliminate transportation changes altogether, an unrealistic option. Working with computer specialists from their local school district, the team members developed a software system called "PickUp Patrol," which enables parents to modify their child's transportation plan online via a secure site. Through several rounds of testing the team confirmed that the software addresses all stakeholders' needs for efficiency, convenience, security, and affordability.

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A panel of community leaders, scientists and experts in science education judged this idea as one of the top eight entries in the U.S. More than 735 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 15th year and has attracted more than 19,000 students from diverse backgrounds all across the U.S. The program is sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation (www.columbusfdn.org) and is endorsed by the National Middle School Association.

Past winners have included a team from San Diego that has secured a provisional patent for a specialized seat cushion design that uses sensory feedback to train people to maintain a healthy posture while sitting at a computer, and a group of students from Illinois who developed a multifaceted recycling awareness campaign that has increased recycling in their community by 60% in just four months.

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 nearly a 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, innovative ideas of America’s youth, and honor teachers. These programs include the *Agriscience Awards*, *Christopher Columbus Awards*, *Homeland Security Awards* and the *Life Sciences Awards*.

For more information, call 1-800-291-6020 or visit www.christophercolumbusawards.com.

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