



Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation

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CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS AWARDS TEAMS INVITED TO WHITE HOUSE SCIENCE FAIR

February 7, 2012 Washington, D.C. – Today President Obama hosted the Second White House Science Fair, and for the second time a team sponsored by the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation was among the 33 teams to exhibit their inventions and projects. Two other teams were also invited to attend.

The **\$25,000 Columbus Foundation Community Grant** winning team in the 2011 **Christopher Columbus Awards** was chosen to display its community project on the problem of abandoned boats. Known as **The River Rangers**, the team of three middle school girls lives in an area surrounded by water. The Atlantic Ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the Waccamaw River are all prominent geographical features that give the area its beauty; provide food, water, and transportation; and help draw about 14 million vacationers a year. Therefore, a problem that affects the water affects everyone, by hurting both the environment and the local economy. A growing concern in the Myrtle Beach region is the issue of pleasure boats being abandoned in the local waterways. The boats crowd the waterways, creating an unsafe situation for fishermen, boaters, and swimmers, while leaking fuel and other materials that contaminate the water, threatening wildlife and humans in the area.

Through research, the students learned that the slumping economy and high unemployment have resulted in many boat-owners' struggling to make payments and to afford fuel and dock fees. Unable to sell their boats in an overcrowded market, many feel they have no other option but to abandon them.



Though the students realized they couldn't physically remove the boats themselves, they could make the community aware of the issue. The team launched a website at www.scriverrangers.com to serve as a hub for local residents to report abandoned boats and receive warnings about boats sighted in the area.

*L to R: MaKayla Arteaga, Christian Hanna,
Bethany Slayton, Dr. Maria Lombardo,
Foundation Chair*

"These remarkable young women and their coach have every reason to be proud of how their vision of making a difference in their community is being accomplished," said Dr. Maria Lombardo, Chair of the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation. "It is a true life example of STEM education, which is President Obama's mission to promote science, math, technology and engineering."

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The team of three—Christian Hanna, MaKayla Arteaga and Bethany Slayton were sixth graders at different schools in the Myrtle Beach area when they won the \$25,000 grant in June. The team, along with their coach Michelle Ruthenberg, will work with the Foundation and Horry County, their local community partner, throughout the year to turn their idea into reality.

The White House also invited *Christopher Columbus Awards* 2011 Gold Medal winner Anthony Edvalson from Mont Vernon, NH and 2010 Finalists Cassandra Lin and John Perino of Westerly, RI to attend the science fair to view the exhibits and discuss their team's innovative projects.

The students 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 the opportunity to meet Dr. Subra Suresh, Director of the National Science Foundation, Bill Nye the "Science Guy," and Neil deGrasse Tyson, American astrophysicist, Director of Hayden Planetarium.

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.

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