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**All Saints Regional Catholic School Students Named as One of Six Finalist Teams  
in National Science/Community Service Competition,  
Win Trip to Walt Disney World®**

***Students develop briquette presses that uses bio-waste readily available  
in countries impacted by large rates of deforestation***

AUBURN, N.Y.—April 30, 2012—Bright ideas, solid research and teamwork won three students from All Saints Regional Catholic School in Manahawkin, NJ, a spot as finalists in the Christopher Columbus Awards, a nationwide program that challenges middle-school students to explore opportunities for positive change in their communities. Eighth-graders Samantha Barton, Michael Cofone, Anthony Ricci, and their coach, Stephen Kubricki, made it to the semifinals earlier this month, and are now one of six finalist teams in the country to compete for Gold Medals and U.S. Savings Bonds.

The team became aware that almost half of the world's population uses wood from nearby forests or charcoal for cooking and heating, as they have no access to other energy sources. According to the Food and Agricultural Organization's Global Forest Resource Assessment, 80% of Africans use wood for cooking, which is resulting in rapid deforestation and two-thirds of the Philippines' forests will be eliminated within the next decade.

Addressing this concern, the team identified the countries with the largest deforestation rates -- Honduras, Nigeria, Philippines, Benin, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal, North Korea, Ecuador and Haiti – to formulate their solution. They determined that peanut shells, corn stalks, sugarcane waste and banana peels constitute major agricultural products in nine of the 10 countries with the largest deforestation rate and could serve as an alternate source of fuel. The team consulted with Rowan University and MIT, to develop and test three different mini briquette presses that can be tailored to use bio-mass products specific to each of these countries.

The team remarked, "Our goal and mission is to design and distribute a low-cost, easy to ship briquette press that utilizes bio-waste products specific to each country. This will reduce the need to cut down trees for fuel, clean the air, and create local cottage industries, with little or no start-up cost, that will improve the economic and environmental future for many of our global neighbors."

-more-

**FEATURING THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION COMMUNITY GRANT**

SPONSORED BY THE CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS FELLOWSHIP FOUNDATION  
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A panel of community leaders, scientists and experts in science education selected this idea as one of the top six entries in the U.S. More than 800 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 will compete in the **Christopher Columbus Awards National Championship Week**, June 10-15, 2012, plus a \$200 grant to further develop their project.

Each member of two Gold Medal winning teams will receive a \$2,000 U.S. Savings Bond.

The finalists will also attend 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 the *Magic Kingdom®* and *Disney's Hollywood Studios®*.

### **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 16th 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](http://www.columbusfdn.org)) and is endorsed by the Association of Middle Level Education. 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 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*, *Homeland Security Award*, *Life Sciences Awards* and *Christopher Columbus Awards*.

For more information, call 1-800-291-6020 or visit [www.christophercolumbusawards.com](http://www.christophercolumbusawards.com).

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