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**Island Trees Memorial Middle School Students Named as One of Six Finalist Teams in National Science/Community Service Competition, Win Trip to Walt Disney World®**

***Students develop remote controlled garbage can to assist elderly and handicapped individuals get their trash to the curb***

AUBURN, N.Y.—April 30, 2012—Bright ideas, solid research and teamwork won four students from Island Trees Memorial Middle School, Levittown, NY, 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 Alesha Ali, Michael Henken, John Jeannetti, Troy Veritzan, and their coach, Eileen Anderson, 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.

After noticing the struggles and possible injury risks from falls or strains their elderly neighbors and wheel-chair bound relatives had getting their trash cans to the curb, the team decided to research possible solutions. The team found that 15.2% of the population in the county are over the age of 65 and the leading cause of injury or death for this age group are falls. Many hospital admissions for trauma are from falls - most commonly being non-fatal but costly.

The team created a garbage can that can help make it easier for the elderly and handicapped to take out their trash. They conducted surveys, interviews and did Internet research regarding a myriad of topics - how often the elderly and disabled are injured by falling, robotics, and batteries as well as the history of garbage cans. The team's surveys and research led them to develop a remote controlled garbage can they call the "Handy Can". The team's prototype is made from the engine, axels and wheels from a remote controlled monster truck, a plank of plywood and a standard outdoor garbage can. They tested it on rough and smooth surfaces, with a variety of weights over a distance of 41 feet.

The team remarked, "Our survey results indicated how common it is to struggle taking out trash receptacles. The survey and interviews we conducted showed us that many in our community and families have problems with this or know someone who does. The problem will grow as the baby boomer generation ages and the elderly population increases."

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**FEATURING THE COLUMBUS FOUNDATION COMMUNITY GRANT**

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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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