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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Robotics Tournament

Minnesota once again leads the nation with this inaugural competition

Basketballs will be flying at Williams Arena on Saturday, May 19, but they will be hurled by robots, not humans. Actually, there will be humans controlling the robots.

The inaugural Minnesota State Robotics Tournament, the first of its kind in the nation sponsored by a high school activities association, will be conducted on the famous raised floor of “The Barn.” Students on 28 teams throughout Minnesota will compete to claim the inaugural state championship.

Rebound RumbleSM is the name of the game, the same game that robotics teams throughout the country played this year. Designed and managed by FIRST[®], — For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology — the game involves two competing alliances of three teams attempting to score as many baskets as possible in a two minute and 15 second match using their remote-controlled robots they designed and built.

The game is played on a level, enclosed area 27-by-54 foot in dimension. The matches begin with a 15-second hybrid period in which the robots operate independently of drivers. Baskets scored during this period are worth extra points. The baskets are placed at different heights and the higher the hoop, the higher the score.

The matches conclude with student drivers attempting to balance their robots on pivoting bridges at the center of the competition area. One robot from each team during qualification matches will also try to balance on a separate Coopertition[™] bridge for additional points.

The 28 qualified teams represent the top 24 teams, plus ties, from various FIRST[®] regional competitions. Minnesota has the third largest FIRST[®] Robotics Competition state contingent in the nation with 153 teams, surpassing even Texas which has 147 teams this year. Minnesota has the most teams per capita of any state in the nation. There are nearly as many FIRST[®] Robotics teams in Minnesota as there are boys’ hockey teams (157).

Here is an alphabetic list of the teams, preceded by each team’s FIRST[®]-designated number: 2825 AFSA, 4226 Albany, 2957 Alden-Conger, 3058 Annandale, 2232 Anoka, 3081 Bloomington Kennedy, 3630 Breck School of Golden Valley, 4174 Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart, 2450 Cretin-Derham Hall of St. Paul, 2220 Eagan, 1816 Edina, 3293 Fergus Falls, 2239 Hopkins, 2052 Irondale, 3840 Isanti County 4H, 2861 Lake City, 3454 Mahtomedi, 2549 Minneapolis Washburn, 2538 Morris Area, 4217 Nashwauk-Keewatin, 3883 Park of Cottage Grove, 2169 Prior Lake, 3747 RiverBend Academy/LCWM, 2530 Rochester High Schools, 3018 St. Peter, 2508 Stillwater Area, 3277 Thief River Falls, and 2883 Warroad.

The schedule: Opening Ceremonies at 8:45 a.m.; Preliminary Rounds involving randomly drawn alliances from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Championship Rounds involving the top four teams after choosing their own alliance partners in 2-out-of-3 competition at 2:30 p.m.

Additional fun facts about Minnesota robotics:

* The growth of robotics programs in the state has been exponential. In 2006 there were only two teams; 16 in 2007; 54 in 2008; 81 in 2009; 105 in 2010; 131 in 2011; and 153 in 2012.

* Roughly half of Minnesota’s teams are located outside of the Twin Cities metropolitan area and roughly half of Minnesota’s high school students have access to a FIRST[®] Robotics team at their school or at a partnering school.

* The 10,000 Lakes/North Star Double-Regional was the largest FIRST[®] Robotics event outside of the World Championship, with a combined total of 128 teams competing this year March 30-31 at Williams and Mariucci arenas. Sixty-four teams competed at the Lake Superior Regional March 9-10 this year in Duluth in only its second season.

* Edina is in its seventh year of competition, the longest running robotics program in the state. The program was initiated by a junior who built the robot in his dad's kitchen. Eighty percent of Edina's robotics team graduates pursue higher education in either engineering or science.

* Alden-Conger, which has 17 percent of its student body involved in robotics and a 50-50 split of boys and girls, took time after school to assist another struggling team in Operation Save Blue Earth.

* The Eagan team has used more than 2,000 LED lights to create name tags, bracelets, decorate carts and its mascot costume, as well as other uses. The intent is to light up interest in STEM — Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

* The Irondale robotics team, State Fair ribbon winners the past two years, uses a vision tracking program to locate the targets behind the hoops. The team also constructed a school-themed T-shirt cannon that is used at football games.

* The RiverBend Academy/Lake Crystal-Wellcome Memorial robotics team's two main tools are a Sawzall® and drill press. Their mentor's superstition requires them to sing Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer" before every competition. The team's "cookie lady" bakes them and the team sells them to the tune of about \$1,000 this year.

* The Warroad nickname is F.R.E.D. That stands for Fighting Rednecks Engineering and Design. A total of 890 person hours were spent designing, building and prepping the team's robot for the recent North Star Regional.