

August 23, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
www.spaceelevatorconference.org

Contact: Carolyn Davids
425-788-0187 cmdavids@seanet.com

Area Youth Robotics Teams Reach New Heights at Space Elevator Conference



Photo: Elaina Franklin

Team “Nerdy and Proud,” from Shelton, WA, position their robot on the climbing ribbon.

Climbers team from Bellevue, with Sammamish-based *Brit Bots* claiming second. And in the *(Almost) Anything Goes* class, team *W.A.S.A.B.I.*, from Bellevue, took first place with Woodinville’s *Team 417, Swerve Robotics*, coming in second.

A special Engineering Award was presented to team *W.A.S.A.B.I.*, who, according to David Schilling, lead judge of the competition, “... managed to improve their robot over the course of the event, doing what engineers do best: observing what was happening, analyzing why things weren’t proceeding as expected, and tweaking both hardware and software to get the results they wanted.”

While the teams tweaked and tested their robots between rounds of competition, there were plenty of other activities for families to enjoy throughout the afternoon. Children and parents alike explored engineering, space and nanotechnology with Pacific Science Center staff; visited the Museum of Flight’s “Robot Garage,” where kids tested their rover-building skills; created their own spacecraft or futuristic models at the LEGO Build Zone; saw and even test drove robots from local robotics teams and clubs; and met a full-scale, hand-built working replica of R2-D2.

For those curious about the space elevator, the conference offered two free SE 101 sessions during which experts on the space elevator concept and technology presented one-hour talks on the challenges of building a space elevator and the opportunities that could result from such an endeavor. Each session was followed by a brief question and answer period. And during each of the sessions, a member of the audience had a chance to test the breaking strength of a high tech Zylon tether using the same test machine used in the NASA Strong Tether Centennial Challenge.

All of these Family Science Fest activities ran parallel to day two of the conference’s three day Technical Program sessions. These sessions, which took place just down the hall from the Family events, engaged scientists, engineers, students and enthusiasts in discussions of the technical, political/social, legal, economic

Redmond, Washington – August 23, 2011 – The annual Space Elevator Conference held its first ever Family Science Fest on August 13, 2011, at the Microsoft Conference Center in Redmond. A highlight of the event was “RoboQuest,” a robotics competition in which robots built by youth teams from around the Puget Sound area vied to climb a 15' ribbon as quickly as possible while carrying weights simulating satellite payloads. The runs were scored based on the number of successful ascents and descents and the number of satellites deployed by the robotic climbers. This unique engineering challenge was not only fun, it also encouraged learning in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

With twelve teams competing in three different categories, the competition was fierce between the robots but friendly among the kids. Students collaborated and competed with each other throughout the day and when the final tallies were totaled, the winners were as follows: In the *LEGO Only Pre-built* class, Bellevue-based *Mindstorm Masters*, came in first, with second place taken by *The Brick Heads*, a team from Duvall. In the *LEGO Build on the Spot* class, first place went to the *Star*

August 23, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
www.spaceelevatorconference.org

Contact: Carolyn Davids
425-788-0187 cmdavids@seanet.com

and other issues to be solved before a space elevator can become a reality. The theme at this year's program, "Developing Stronger, Lighter Tethers – 30 MegaYuris or Bust!," focused on the very strong yet ultra-lightweight material required for a viable space elevator. Researchers from Rice University and the University of Cincinnati reported on the progress being made towards producing such a material. Later in the day, the conference attendees took a break from the technical talks to watch the RoboQuest finals and many commented positively on the design solutions the youth teams had used to tackle the very same problems that would face engineers developing an actual space elevator climber.

Fueled by space elevator tech talks and the excitement of robotics, many conference attendees, especially students on the robotics teams, are already planning to attend next year's conference, tentatively scheduled in August of 2012. To view additional SE conference photos and to keep up-to-date on the details of next year's event, please visit us on the web at: www.spaceelevatorconference.org.

The 2011 Space Elevator Conference was supported by Microsoft Corporation (www.microsoft.com), Leeward Space Foundation (www.leewardspacefoundation.org) and the International Space Elevator Consortium (ISEC) (www.isec.org).

###