



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, April 6, 2007

**For more information, contact:**

Mandi Semple, Alumni and Public Relations Coordinator

Phone: 925-362-7212

Email: [mandi.semple@athenian.org](mailto:mandi.semple@athenian.org)

The Athenian School  
2100 Mt. Diablo Scenic Boulevard  
Danville, CA 94506  
[www.athenian.org](http://www.athenian.org)

**ATHENIAN'S ROBOTICS TEAM TAKES SECOND PLACE AND WINS GENERAL MOTORS DESIGN AWARD AT ROBOTICS COMPETITION AT U.C. DAVIS**

The Athenian School's Robotics Team, known as Athenian Robotics Collective (ARC/Team 852), completed the 2006-07 Robotics season with two outstanding wins at the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Sacramento Davis Regional competition held at the U.C. Davis campus on Friday and Saturday, March 30-31, 2007. The FIRST Foundation's competition gives high school students the opportunity to design, program and build a robot to compete with other robots in regional and national competitions.

ARC took second place in the overall competition and won the General Motors Industrial Design Award. The robot that wins the GM Award possesses the following design features: "elegant component layout, simple and efficient mechanical structure, innovative use of sensor feedback, and presets for robot control." In addition to these wins at the Davis competition, ARC also took second place at the Silicon Valley Regional FIRST Robotics competition held at San Jose State University on March 15-17, 2007.

The FIRST Robotics Competition is an exciting, multinational competition that teams professionals and young people to solve an engineering design problem in an intense and competitive way. The program is a life-changing, career-molding experience—and a lot of fun. This year, the program expanded to 32,500 participating students representing approximately 1,300 teams. These teams come from every state in the U.S., as well as from Brazil, Canada, the United Kingdom, Mexico, Israel, and the Netherlands. These teams participate in 37 Regional Competitions to qualify for the Championship Event at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia. The competitions combine the practical application of science and technology with the fun, intense energy, and excitement of a championship-sporting event. The competitions are

high-tech spectator events, which result from focused brainstorming, real-world teamwork, dedicated mentoring and project timelines.

The game for the 2007 FIRST Robotics season is called Rack 'n' Roll. Rack 'n' Roll is played by two three-team alliances on a 54' by 26' 8" field with a center structure, called a Rack, containing 24 "spider legs." To score, teams use three different types of tubes called Keepers, Ringers and Spoilers. The game is made up of two scoring periods. The first period is Autonomous, where the robots run without driver control for 15 seconds. In the Autonomous period, robots try to place a Keeper tube on one of the "spider legs" of the Rack using a color vision tracking system to find one of the four target lights at the top of the Rack. Once placed, a Keeper tube may not be removed or "spoiled." The second period lasts two minutes, and the robots are driver-controlled. During this period, the teams attempt to score more points by using the robots to add Ringers onto the "spider legs" or by "spoiling" the opposing teams score by placing a black Spoiler tube over the "Ringer." Points are earned and scored exponentially by the number of consecutive Ringers and Keepers in a column or row. Alliances may score additional points by the end of the match if their robots are in their home zone and have been lifted 4" or more off of the floor by another robot on their alliance before the final buzzer sounds.

The Athenian Robotics Collective/Team 852 was founded in the fall of 2001 and is active throughout the academic school year. Work intensifies for the team during the six-week time frame that the robot is being built, called the build period. The students work many additional hours and weekends getting their robot prepared for the *FIRST* competition. The Athenian Robotics Collective has built robots for competitions since 2002, with the current competition in 2007 as its sixth competition. They have received many achievements and awards, taking first place at the 2006 Sacramento Davis Regional competition and at the 2003 and 2004 Silicon Valley Regional competitions. Last year, ARC also won the General Motors Industrial Design Award at the Sacramento Davis Regional competition and traveled to the National Championship at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

Team Leaders for the 2007 competition are Russell Patton, Justin Goh and Joel Armstrong. Current team membership includes Senior Team Members Nora McIntosh, Russell Patton, Joel Armstrong, Lawrence Tse, Kelly Dannucci and Carolyn Earnest; Junior Team Members Ed Penico, Karl Duff, Ben Cerjan, Mark Ellis, Erik Farr, Justin Goh, Michael Zalewski and Nikta Akhavan; Sophomore Members Andrew Gerst, Blair Frank, Jonathan Schafgans, Benjamin Wang, Marcus Lau, Curran Reddy and Tae Ho Kim; Freshman Members Grant Barnard, Karlena Lee, Colden Eldridge, Maximilian Kapczynski, and Bennett Rand; and Middle School Member Keith Armstrong. Team Mentors are Athenian faculty members Megan Leich (Athenian alumna, class of 1994) and Dr. Eugene Mizusawa; Peter McIntosh, Steve Post, Jaime Romero, Dave Zubryd, Rob Armstrong, Charles Duff, Gigi and Bruce Remington.

FIRST redefines winning for these students. Teams are rewarded for excellence in design, demonstrated team spirit, gracious professionalism and maturity, and ability to overcome obstacles. Scoring the most points is a secondary goal. Winning means building partnerships that last, and the benefits of participation

in these competitions are lasting and numerous. Colleges, universities, corporations, businesses, and individuals provide scholarships to FIRST participants, given the academic excellence demonstrated by these high school students. Volunteer engineers involved with the projects and working with students experience again many of the reasons they chose engineering as a profession. Additionally, the companies involved both contribute to the community and help to prepare and create their future workforce. The competition shows students that the technological fields hold many future opportunities and that the basic concepts of science, math, engineering, and invention are exciting and interesting.

The Athenian School's Robotics program provides an experiential learning opportunity that allows for exploration into engineering for those who participate. For some students, this may be a springboard into a high technology career. For others, it is a fascinating hobby that compliments science education at Athenian. Head of School Eleanor Dase has this to say about Athenian Robotics: "I am exceedingly impressed with the skills, dedication and contagious enthusiasm of our students working on the robot, whether it is a Sunday afternoon or 11 o'clock at night. It is even more amazing that they do this for no credit at Athenian but instead because they love it."

---

**ABOUT FIRST:** FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) was founded in 1989 by Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway Human Transporter. He aimed, "To create a world where science and technology are celebrated ... where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes."

FIRST operates the FIRST Robotics Competition in which teams of high school students and their mentors participate in a program—sponsored and assisted by local companies and volunteers—to design, assemble, and test a robot capable of performing a specified task in competition with other teams. Teams of young people solve a common problem using a standard "kit of parts" and a common set of rules. Teams build robots from the parts and enter them in a series of competitions designed by Dean Kamen, Woodie Flowers, and a committee of engineers and other professionals. The competition has become an international program and is continuously growing, with 1,305 teams (32,500 high school students) participating in 37 Regional Competitions to ultimately qualify for the Championship Competition at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia.

FIRST also runs the FIRST Lego League, for children ages nine to 14 years old, and FIRST Place, an innovative science and technology center which includes a hands-on children's science museum. Learn more at [www.usfirst.org](http://www.usfirst.org).

**ABOUT THE ATHENIAN SCHOOL:** The Athenian School is a distinctive San Francisco Bay Area college preparatory school, providing an outstanding education that is challenging, engaging, personal, interactive and international. With 457 students in grades six to 12, Athenian's 75-acre campus lies at

the base of Mt. Diablo in Danville, 32 miles east of San Francisco. The student to faculty ratio is an enviable 10:1 and the average class size is 15 students. The Athenian School is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the California Association of Independent Schools.

# # #