

Girl Scout First Lego League Team from Tri-Cities Headed to World Championship Geek Squad will compete in FLL World Championship April 24-27 in St. Louis

(Kennewick, Wash–April 3, 2013): A team of five Girl Scouts, four Cadettes and one Senior, from the Tri-Cities are headed to the World Championship *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) Competition in St. Louis, Missouri later this month. The “Geek Squad” team developed a unique accessibility device for senior citizens and programmed a Lego robot to navigate a four by eight foot table of challenges related to senior living.

The girls, Tirzah (14), Jaycelin (13), Madi (14), Christina (14) and Rielly (13) meet weekly as a Girl Scout troop and to practice as a FLL team. These girls are also active in several other school events each week.

How the FLL competition works: FLL teams have to identify a societal need and devise a solution to the problem. This year’s theme is a Senior Solutions Challenge. The FLL competition is judged in four areas: project presentation; robot performance; technical design and programming of the robot; and teamwork demonstrating FLL Core Values and a spirit of “coopertition” (a term coined by the *FIRST* LEGO League).

The Geek Squad met with the director of a local assisted living facility to discuss challenges faced by residents. The girls also spoke with their grandparents and other senior citizens they knew to determine the challenges they face. Once all the ideas were discussed, they decided to focus on creating a solution for poor hand grip, hoping to allow seniors to maintain their independence. The Geek Squad created a working prototype of the Handle Helper, a handheld device that can hold a variety of small handles that can be difficult to grasp—from pencils to toothbrushes. The Handle Helper effectively enlarges the handles making it possible for those with poor or no hand grip strength to use common, everyday items. It is interchangeable with many of these items making it a cost-effective solution as well. The Geek Squad asked seniors to use their Handle Helper and everyone who has used it has given it high marks.

“This year has truly been a year of discovery for the Geek Squad, a team of enthusiastic and creative Girl Scouts who have worked together for two years,” said FLL coach Tiffanie Eyre. “I wanted the girls to be challenged and stretch this year, and they rose to that challenge. At the state competition in February, they placed in the top five teams for Robot Performance and were thrilled to win the Champion Award, which led to the invitation to attend the World Championship in St. Louis in April.”

At competition this year, the Geek Squad’s robot, “Bill Gates,” performed incredibly well, says coach Eyre. At the Tri-Cities regional competition in January, the Geek Squad earned both the Robot Performance and Overall Champion Award which led them to the Eastern Washington State Competition in February which led the invite to the World Championship.

The girls have raised several thousand dollars to cover the cost of travel, hotel and registration fees. They have received funding from Motorola, Girl Scouts USA and community members interested in supporting girls in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. In addition, the girls will be using funds they have earned through Girl Scout cookie sales. If you would like to support this troop and other troops participating in similar activities please contact Stacie Davis at Girl Scouts Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho at 800-827-9478, ext. 217 or sdavis@gsewni.org.



Geek Squad Team

About First Lego League: *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) is an international program for 9 to 14 year-old children (9 to 16 outside the U.S., Canada and Mexico) created in a partnership between *FIRST* and The LEGO Group in 1998 to get children excited about science and technology – and teach them valuable employment and life skills. Using LEGO MINDSTORMS® technologies and LEGO Education materials, children work alongside adult mentors to design, build, and program autonomous robots and create an innovative solution to a problem as part of their research project. After eight intense weeks, the competition season culminates at high-energy, sports-like tournaments. Like any other organized “sport,” teams also fundraise, create a team identity, and go on field trips.

Currently in its fourteenth year, *FIRST* LEGO League anticipates its biggest season ever, with more than 20,500 teams in more than 60 countries competing in hundreds of Qualifying Tournaments and Championship Tournaments. More than 205,000 children will compete to win honors and recognition. Teams will also have the opportunity to participate at the *FIRST* LEGO League World Festival. The 2012-2013 SENIOR SOLUTIONSSM Challenge, still in progress, tasked FLL teams in more than 60 countries to improve the quality of life for seniors by helping them continue to be independent, engaged, and connected in their communities.

About Girl Scouts Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho

Girls are at the center of everything we do. Girl Scouts is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls, the leading authority on girls’ healthy development and is working with girls and women to transform the leadership landscape for girls into the next century. Girl Scouts Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho serves more than 8,200 girls and 2,600 adult volunteers. The council region encompasses 67,000 miles that includes 20 counties in central and eastern Washington and 10 counties in northern Idaho. Girl Scouts Eastern Washington and Northern Idaho is committed to discovering, celebrating and fostering the leader in every girl. *Girl Scouts builds girls of courage, confidence and character who make the world a better place.* For more information about the council, visit www.gsewni.org.