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**Contact:** Kim McMorris  
312/742-1620 (office) / 773/213-1503 (cell)  
[KMcMorris@cityofchicago.org](mailto:KMcMorris@cityofchicago.org)

## ***After School Matters* and the *Motorola Foundation* team up to support Chicago teens in the FIRST Robotics Competition Midwest Regional**

(Chicago)—Eight teams of Chicago teenagers from After School Matters programs are competing in today's FIRST Robotics Competition at the UIC Pavilion. With support from the Motorola Foundation, After School Matters teams include the Chicago Knights (AgapeWerks, a Community-Based Organization), Jaguars (Julian High School), Electric Eagles (Lindblom Math and Science Academy), Robocats (Clemente High School), The Arks (The Ark of St. Sabina, a Community-Based Organization), Tech Tigers (Austin Polytechnical Academy), Scorpion Kings (Curie High School), and Firebirds (Phoenix Military Academy).

"The Robotics experience is an exciting way for teens to not only gain new engineering and technical skills, but to also learn the importance of teamwork and commitment," said Executive Director of After School Matters David Sinski. "These experiences reflect one of our core guiding principles—to expose teens to a wide variety of careers and provide them with marketable job readiness skills. We are grateful to the Motorola Foundation for their investment in these young people who are tomorrow's workforce."

The Competition challenges teams of young people and their mentors to solve a common problem using a "starter kit of parts" and a common set of rules. The teams build robots from the parts and enter them in the FIRST competition. After School Matters participation in the Robotics program supports the organization's goal of providing quality programs that give teens an opportunity to explore their interests with hands-on activities alongside peers and adult mentors.

As part of the Competition, After School Matters teens will participate in an innovative game called "Lunacy," which mimics some of the challenges faced by members of NASA as they explore the moon. The floor game, "the crater" is covered with a low-traction surface that mimics the moon's textured surface. Game pieces include Orbit Balls, Moon Rocks, Empty Cells and Super Cells. This experience helps to redefine winning, as teens are rewarded for excellence in design, demonstrated team spirit, gracious professionalism and maturity, and the ability to overcome obstacles. Scoring the most points is a secondary goal, while winning means building partnerships that last.

"The Motorola Foundation strives to inspire a love of science and technology among young people through hands-on experiences," said Eileen Sweeney, director of the Motorola Foundation. "The After School Matters partnership with FIRST gives students the opportunity to make the connection between the cool technology they use to build robots and the math and science concepts they learn in the classroom."

The FIRST Robotic Competition runs from February 27-28<sup>th</sup> (matches start at 9:30 AM), and is free to the public. Visitors are welcome to stop by the pits for a behind-the-scenes look at the activities and to wish the teens well.

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