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Bronx School Wins Visit From Humanoid Robot

- In National Essay Contest, New York City Students Imagine Future Applications for ASIMO -

New York, NY – Inspired by ASIMO, the world’s most advanced humanoid robot, nine students from a public middle school in the Bronx have won a national essay contest on the future of humanoid robotics. By winning the ASIMO Essay Contest, the students and the entire school at New York City MS 390 will receive a one-of-a-kind educational and interactive visit from ASIMO, on Tuesday, March 23, 2004.

ASIMO is the world’s only bi-pedal humanoid robot capable of walking forward and backward, turning while walking, and ascending and descending stairs and is the result of more than 18 years of research by Honda Motor Co., Ltd.

“The MS 390 students, faculty and community are honored to be recognized as the winner of the ASIMO Essay Contest,” said Jason Levy, assistant principal of MS 390. “Our school’s mission is to ‘Strive for Excellence,’ and we are proud of our school’s achievements over the past few years. We look forward to welcoming ASIMO to our community.” During ASIMO’s March 23 visit to the school, all students will see and learn about ASIMO first-hand.

The ASIMO Essay Contest asked students to describe their vision for the future role of humanoid robots and to explain why ASIMO should visit their school. The winning essay was compiled and written by 8th-grader Asetta Ramsey with the help of her MS 390 classmates. It imagined that in the future, robots like ASIMO could be used in underwater research, firefighting, piloting planes, protecting schools and the community, helping the elderly and even working as a diplomat in dangerous situations. The students wrote that a visit from ASIMO would inspire MS 390 students to “see science in a better and different way,” and that it would be a “once in a lifetime experience” for the students and the surrounding community.

“American Honda is very excited to bring ASIMO to this New York City public school,” said Jeffrey A. Smith, leader of the ASIMO North American Project from American Honda Motor Co., Inc., which presented the “Say Hello to ASIMO” North American Educational Tour at the nation’s top science museums and educational institutions over the past 15 months. “Their very original essay proved to our panel of judges that these students are truly inspired by the possibilities of science and technology.”

ASIMO’s visit to the Bronx will be the final stop of the educational tour, which provided a unique educational experience to inspire young students to pursue academic study in the sciences. Since the launch of the tour in January 2003, more than 80,000 students and museum visitors have seen ASIMO in person. Future ASIMO touring activities will be announced this spring at www.asimo.honda.com.

More than 560 students nationwide participated in the ASIMO Essay Contest, with entries from schools in 23 states. Essays were judged on creativity, methodology and accuracy by a panel of scientists, engineers and educators.

The MS 390 students contributing to the winning essay are in grades 6, 7 and 8 and take part in a robotics program called “RoboLab” – the only program of its kind in the Bronx. In RoboLab, more than 220 students meet twice a week to build small robots and program them to perform specific challenges. The program is lead by teacher Eileen McNamee. Nine students in the program contributed to the winning essay: Asetta Ramsey, Andrea Dove, Luz Villar, Joshua Hernandez, Max Cruz, Hawoly Diop, Jarette Billings, Kimisha Bostick and Ariel McKinley.

MS 390 is a New York City Department of Education public middle school, serving students in grades 5, 6, 7 and 8. The school is in the process of strengthening its educational programs and restructuring its academic curriculum. At the end of 5th grade, students apply to one of three “academies” in the upper school - the “College Prep Academy,” the “Academy for Advanced Learning,” and the “Academy for Arts and Sciences,” all of which are supported by technology in the classroom. A grant from the Beaumont Foundation has recently provided many students with access to laptop computers.

ASIMO (Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility) was developed by Honda Motor Co., Ltd. after more than 18 years of research. Created to eventually act as a helper for people in need, ASIMO can walk forward and backward, turn smoothly without pausing, climb stairs and maintain balance while walking on uneven slopes and surfaces. ASIMO also has two arms and two hands,

which ease such tasks as reaching for and grasping objects, switching lights on and off, and opening and closing doors.

About Honda

Honda is one of the world's leading producers of mobility products including its diverse line-up of automobiles, motorcycles and ATVs, power products, marine engines and personal watercraft. This diverse product line-up has also made Honda the world's preeminent engine-maker, with production of more than 17 million engines globally in 2003. On a global basis, Honda has more than 120 manufacturing facilities in 31 nations.

Honda began operations in North America in 1959 with the establishment of American Honda Motor Co., Inc., Honda's first overseas subsidiary. Honda began assembling motorcycles in America in 1979, with U.S. automobile manufacturing starting in 1982. Honda now employs more than 21,000 Americans in the design, manufacture and marketing of its products in America. Honda currently builds products in 11 manufacturing plants in North America, with three major R&D centers in the U.S.

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