



Media Contacts
Pati Urias
602.568.9763
psuprconsultants@gmail.com

Science Foundation Arizona P: 602.682.2800
400 E. Van Buren St. Ste 200 F: 602-682-2890
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

Terry Koch
Science Foundation Arizona
602.682.2800
tkoch@sfaz.org
www.sfaz.org

For Immediate Release

Science Foundation Arizona Commends Carl Hayden Student and Teachers with Innovation Heroes Awards

Robotics Student, Mentors Commended for Excellence in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Education

Phoenix, AZ – November 24, 2009 – A Carl Hayden High School student and his two mentors are Science Foundation Arizona’s latest round of *Innovation Heroes* being honored for their outstanding efforts in robotics and engineering education.

The *Innovation Heroes* award program recognizes students and teachers who are using innovative approaches toward STEM academic excellence. The awards are co-sponsored by Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold, Intel Corporation, and the Rodel Charitable Foundation of Arizona. Since 2006, Science Foundation Arizona’s K-12 education programs have helped educate over 54,000 students in critical math and science skills statewide.

The student, Jonathan Harris, was nominated by his teacher, Faridodin “Fred” Lajvardi, a longtime robotics and engineering educator at Carl Hayden High School. Harris was selected by Science Foundation Arizona’s STEM Initiative (SFAZ STEM) because of his contributions to the school’s *Falcon Robotics Team* and the construction of a three-dimensional (3D) viewing system allowing for better depth perception in monitoring robots’ tasks.

In addition, State Senator Debbie McCune Davis nominated Lajvardi and robotics adviser, Dr. Karen Suhm, for a second *Innovation Heroes* award. In her submission essay, McCune Davis noted that Lajvardi and Suhm incorporate advanced technology and complex scoring systems in their teaching methods that challenge students and encourage them to excel toward exciting careers in engineering and technology.

The Carl Hayden *Falcons* team bested 550 teams from around the world in 2008 to win the *Robotics International Chairman’s Award* and was runner-up twice for the international honor in previous years. Lajvardi and Suhm are heavily involved in mentoring and advising the team toward success.

As winners, Jonathan Harris will receive a \$1000 savings bond for college, while Lajvardi and Suhm win a \$500 gift card for supplies.

“I am incredibly impressed with the way Fredi and Karen lead students and encourage them to succeed,” said Senator McCune Davis. “It is clear these two have embraced the concept of STEM teaching and learning and are giving students every opportunity to use hands-on projects to apply STEM to robotics and their everyday lives. I was more than happy to nominate them for this award, and pleased they are being honored for their work.”

“We are encouraged to see students grasping scientific concepts and taking them to a level that will excite them to use their knowledge in college and careers,” said William C. Harris, Science Foundation Arizona president and CEO. “This is the type of success we support – students and teachers excelling in STEM that raise the bar for science education in Arizona.”

“Carl Hayden High School has always excelled in robotics, and the credit goes to the school, its educators and the students who engage in the program,” said Darcy Renfro, executive director of SFaz STEM. “The Falcons’ use of interactive and real-time technological data that enables students to analyze and troubleshoot problems in the robots they construct emphasizes the 21st century skill set necessary to compete for quality jobs in the global marketplace.”

"Most industries – including mining – will look for college graduates who can adapt easily to the knowledge-based workplace and have already built problem-solving skills through STEM education,” said Tracy Bame, Director of Social Responsibility and Community Development for Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold. "We commend these educators for inspiring their students through STEM teaching to think creatively."

The *Innovation Heroes* program is ongoing and awards are made throughout the school year. Nominations are sought for the next round of winners scheduled for January 2010. To learn more about the program and to nominate a student or teacher for outstanding achievements in STEM education, visit www.sfaz.org.

Major funding for the Science Foundation Arizona’s STEM Initiative is provided by Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold.

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About Science Foundation Arizona: Science Foundation Arizona (SFaz) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization initiated in 2006 by the Greater Phoenix Leadership Inc., Southern Arizona Leadership Council and the Flagstaff Forty with the goal to build and strengthen the scientific and education infrastructure in areas of greatest strategic importance to Arizona’s competitiveness in the global economy. These areas comprise advanced communications, biomedicine and sustainable systems that include renewable energies. The state has appropriated monies through the Arizona 21st Century Competitive Initiative Fund and these grants, totaling \$60 million in the first two years, leveraged an additional \$109.8 million in outside capital. SFaz continues to accelerate Arizona’s students’ competency and excellence in STEM education and has to date impacted 54,000 students statewide. SFaz serves as a facilitating bridge between industry and education that ensures a highly skilled Arizona work force as the foundation for a 21st century knowledge-based, global economy. Founding executive leadership groups are funding operating costs for SFaz through 2012, enabling public and philanthropic funds to be directly applied to foundation initiatives. For more information, visit www.sfaz.org

To learn more about the importance of STEM education in the 21st century economy and/or to nominate an Innovation Hero, visit www.sfaz.org.