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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Connecticut Science Center Pilots Teen Robotics Program ***Youth development program gives teens a chance to work alongside scientists***

Hartford, CT- August 2, 2012- This summer, the Connecticut Science Center is piloting an innovative new youth development program. Under the guidance of Science Center staff and the Science Center's first "Scientist in Residence", robotics expert Tim Gifford, local teens are learning to problem-solve, communicate with one another, and build robots that interact with visitors in the Science Center galleries.

Twelve teens, ranging in age from 16-18, were selected for the six-week paid internship program, which ends August 10. Over the course of the summer, they have learned to work together as a team to program various robot models and design activities that engage the Science Center's diverse audiences in the exciting science of robotics. "Building the robots and then explaining them to the museum visitors has been a great motivator for the teens. It is exciting to see the sophistication of the programming and to see the teams synthesize and apply key scientific principles," said Tim Gifford. "Working with the teens in the collaborative process has been very rewarding and a lot of fun."

Half of the Teen Robotics participants have robotics experience, either as members of CT FIRST Robotics competitions or on their own, while the other half are skilled at working with the public (four were Teen Ambassadors at the Science Center as part of an earlier youth development program). Peer-to-peer learning is a major part of the program.

The program coincides with summer vacation exploration camps for younger children. By interacting with Science Center visitors and summer camp participants, the teens are also providing positive role models to children in grades 1-6 by encouraging them to get more excited about science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). "There is growing evidence that teens can have a positive influence on learning, behavior and attitudes among younger children," said Hank Gruner, the Science Center's Vice President of Exhibits & Programs. "By connecting teens that have an interest and passion for science and technology with children, the chances of igniting sparks of interest among new generations of scientists and engineers increases."

"STEM education is of central importance today and for our future. The robots provide a hands-on opportunity to work with the concepts and principals central to math and science. This program at the Science Center gives students a well-rounded experience working with the technology," said Tim Gifford who, in addition to being the Science Center's Scientist in Residence, is CEO of Movia Robots. Gifford has an office in the Science Center and conducts research and development of his software that powers NAO

robots. NAO robots are programmable, 2-foot tall humanoid robots with a wide range of features and capabilities, including groundbreaking work with children on the autism spectrum.

As the Science Center's first Scientist in Residence, Gifford works to enhance the Science Center's robotics offerings, including programs and an upcoming interactive exhibit sponsored by First Niagara Bank Foundation. The exhibit will allow Science Center visitors to interact with NAO robots, powered by Gifford's Movia software.

The 2012 Teen Robotics program has received major funding from two Anonymous Foundations. The Science Center is now seeking additional support to continue the program next summer with a possible expansion. "With the success of this summer's program, the Science Center is looking to expand the program to engage teens in other fields of science and engineering beyond robotics, and also to develop programs for middle school-aged children to foster a pipeline for the teen program," said Hank Gruner.

The teens will be invited to return to the Science Center to work on weekends and during school vacations to continue to share their knowledge and inspire their peers. For more information about the Connecticut Science Center, visit: <http://www.ctsciencecenter.org/>.

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About the Connecticut Science Center The LEED-Gold certified Connecticut Science Center, located in downtown Hartford, sparks creative imagination and an appreciation for science by immersing visitors in fun and educational hands-on, minds-on interactive experiences while maintaining an environmentally conscious presence. Visitors experience over 150 exhibits in ten galleries and a range of topics, including space and earth sciences, physical sciences, biology, the Connecticut River watershed, alternative energy sources, Connecticut inventors and innovations, a children's gallery, and much more. Other features include four educational labs, a 200-seat 3D digital theater, function room, gift store and café, and ongoing events for all ages. The Science Center is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing science education throughout the state of Connecticut and New England, providing learning opportunities for students and adults of all ages, and engaging the community in scientific exploration. More information: www.CTScienceCenter.org or 860.SCIENCE.