

LRG Capital Group Sponsors FIRST Teams Formed in Marin, CA

*San Marin High School and The Branson School Form Marin's First Robotics Teams,
Thanks to Sponsorship by LRG Capital Group*

Larkspur, Calif., December 3, 2007 -- Robotics is now alive and well at San Marin High School, The Branson School, and Sir Francis Drake High School—a first from FIRST and LRG Capital Group, LLC.

FIRST, a renowned international robotics competition that encourages high school students to seek out careers in engineering, math, science, and technology, has just formed teams in the three high schools with the help of global merchant bank LRG Capital Group, Larkspur. Students from the new FIRST teams will face their initial robotics competition at the UC Davis Sacramento Regional Tournament in March.

The newly registered Marin teams, including San Marin High School, Novato (Team 2551) and The Branson School in Ross (Team 2456), as well as Technology High in Rohnert Park (Team 675) comprise the Marin/Sonoma FIRST contingent. Branson School students are collaborating with students from Sir Francis Drake High School, San Anselmo, and the two schools will jointly enter the competition, where they will face teams from San Francisco, Sacramento, San Jose, Portland, and the East Bay.

The FIRST teams are being sponsored and funded by LRG Capital Group. LRG CEO Lawrence Goldfarb serves as a volunteer judge in the FIRST regional event and sponsors several other teams in Northern California. Although several FIRST LEGO® League teams have been formed in Marin middle schools, these are the only high school teams that have ever been organized in Marin.

Students from the Marin teams will join 1,481 other teams from around the world, who compete in 37 regional events for the FIRST Robotics Competition. The competition is held in partnership with NASA and many Fortune 500 sponsors, and involves over 32,000 high school students. There are 61 registered teams in Northern California, averaging 15 to 20 students per team.

For the robotics competition, each team has six weeks to design, build, and program a robot from a kit that is issued by FIRST. The team creates its own version of a robot from the kit and from other materials, and then fields the robot in various activities at the regional competition. Throughout the building process, the teams actually function as a small business, with a budget, task requirements, deadlines, and time restraints. Students draw on various disciplines, including programming, mechanical and electrical engineering, CAD design, construction, animation, and mathematics. There is an emphasis on “gracious professionalism,” which involves teamwork, sharing ideas, and assisting other teams, even though they are opponents.

FIRST provides a learning experience that cannot be duplicated in any other way. Using a sports model, students who would otherwise be ignored in a typical high school setting, gain recognition for their skills in science and math. They work with mentors from business and industry in a real world design challenge, which is new every year.

“I am delighted that we have been able to support the FIRST program in not one, but three Marin High Schools,” said Lawrence Goldfarb. “Local businesses have to take an active approach to improve the lives of youth.”

“We can’t sustain an economy founded on technology pre-eminence without educating our youth more competently in core technology disciplines such as mathematics, computer science, engineering, and the physical sciences. FIRST can fill in some of the gaps in our high schools by helping to stimulate interest in science and technology in after school programs.”

Goldfarb initiated his effort to organize the new FIRST teams in Marin by hosting a reception earlier this year that featured Dean Kamen, the founder of FIRST and one of America’s most well known inventors. Goldfarb then personally recruited high schools from around the county to participate in the program. Next year he hopes to hold a regional FIRST competition in Marin County.

The San Marin High School team of 20 students was organized by students Eric Reed and Dan Xu, at the encouragement of Principal Dr. Robert Vieth. Faculty sponsor for the San Marin team is Leigh Nicolaisen, a physics teacher. Technical advisor is Dave Grenewetzki of Novato, an engineer and entrepreneur who will be working with the faculty and students to build the robots.

San Marin High parent mentors include Tim Buss, Mike Souza, and Sylvia Barry. The San Marin High School team is also cooperating with the FIRST team at Technology High School in Rohnert Park, which has won several awards in the competition in the past several years.

“This program really gets kids involved in science and engineering,” said Grenewetzki. “It shows them that science and engineering can be a fun pursuit. Science and engineering are powerful tools that can be used to do a lot of positive things. These programs let kids know that there is a cool factor in the world of technology.”

The Branson School/Sir Francis Drake team of 10 students was organized by Nate McDonald, a math teacher at The Branson School who has been involved in other FIRST teams in previous teaching positions. Community mentors for The Branson School/Sir Francis Drake team includes two engineers, Jim Davis of Larkspur and James Joaquin of San Rafael.

“FIRST gives our students the opportunity to explore technology, engineering, math, and science and apply the concepts that they’re learning in class to real life,” said McDonald. “It gives them a platform to actually get hands-on experience doing what they’re learning in the classroom.”

“FIRST is just amazing at creating a team atmosphere,” McDonald added. “If you go to a competition, it’s not really one team against another. Everybody’s helping each other out because you’re partnering with different alliances and then trying to be creative to solve the problem. Many kids I have worked with in the past in the FIRST program went directly into engineering school out of high school. FIRST transforms their careers.”

Randall Lam, FIRST Regional Director, said that the two new teams will join 41 others in Northern California who are entering the competition. “Without Larry Goldfarb’s assistance, these two new teams would not be in existence today.”

He added, “As a veteran teacher of 33 years, I cannot think of any other organization that creates a platform for students to become as motivated and enthusiastic about math, science, and engineering, vital skills for our future.”

About FIRST

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) (www.usfirst.org) was founded by inventor Dean Kamen in 1989 to inspire an appreciation of science and technology in young people. Based in Manchester, NH, the 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization delivers accessible, innovative programs that build self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills while motivating young people to pursue opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math. FIRST offers three innovative programs: the FIRST Robotics Competition and the FIRST Tech Challenge for high school students, and the FIRST LEGO® League for 6-14 year olds. Also

located at FIRST headquarters is a research and development facility called FIRST Place that offers science camps and workshops to school groups.

About LRG Capital Group

LRG Capital Group (www.lrgcapital.com) is a global investment, banking and advisory boutique that focuses on public and private companies in the technology, life sciences, hospitality, real estate and entertainment sectors. Founded by Lawrence Goldfarb, the firm provides capital via private equity, commercial loans and structured debt financing, and guides and advises clients on mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance and other strategic alternatives. Based in San Francisco with offices in New York, LRG Capital excels at relationship-focused guidance and financing.

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