



HOT TOPICS FOR CHICAGO-AREA SEVENTH- AND EIGHTH-GRADERS? *How about designing a Future City? - Schools / Teams Wanted*

What's on the mind of a typical American seventh- and eighth-grader:
Sports? Hip- Hop? *Or creating a vision of the future?*

It could happen – especially for the hundreds of Chicago-area middle school students set to participate in the **National Engineers Week Future City Competition™**, which each year invites young people to create a city of tomorrow. What began in 1992 as a modest project to encourage math and science skills and lay the foundation for a career in engineering has become the nation's largest engineering education program, this year expected to reach 30,000 students in 1,100 schools. Chicago has the longest continuously running program in the country.

The Chicago regional competition will be held in mid- late January. First place winners from Chicago will join teams from 39 other regions for an all-expense-paid trip to the Future City National Finals in Washington, D.C., February 15-17, 2010 during National Engineers Week™. Grand prize is a trip to U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama.

The competition asks students, working in teams and under the guidance of a teacher and a volunteer engineer mentor from the community, to design a city of the future and include a plan that helps meet a particular social need. Students build their cities first on computer using *SimCity 4 Deluxe* and then in large three-dimensional scale models. They must also write an abstract describing their city, and an essay on a topic engineering issue. Finally it what has become a standard for the Chicago program five of the best teams have to present and defend their design before a panel of prominent engineer judges all the while parents, teachers, guests listen. The judging is open to the public and FREE to be held at the University of Illinois - Chicago campus.

Future City purposely directs participants to incorporate real engineering challenges into their plans and this year is no different. With thousands of roads, bridges, and railways in need of repair and increased traffic straining budgets, the effective use of basic transportation construction materials will become a pressing topic. Students can create any kind of city or transportation system, but as they devise monorails, people movers, bike paths, or freeways, they will be giving extra scrutiny to urban expansion, environmental issues, and sustainability with achievable, measurable results.

Regional chairman Don Wittmer notes, "It is exciting to see the interaction between the students and witness the enthusiasm that these students have in learning about engineering and the real life problems that are encounter everyday. Our hope is that this competition helps students consider the possibility of studying engineering when they attend college."

Derek Johnson, co-coordinator adds, "It is a great experience for all involved – the students have fun while learning about engineering and gaining valuable teamwork and presentation skills. Engineers, mentors, judges and volunteers always leave impressed by the students' ability and enthusiasm."

If a student's interest in engineering is piqued, then all the better, say the professionals from every engineering discipline who praise the program for reaching young people at a critical time in their education. The hands-on lessons in practical math and science can prove critical in maintaining studies through high school, giving students the skills they need to pursue engineering in college.

Registration deadline for the 2010 Future City Competition is October 15. Contact Chicago regional coordinator Don Wittmer at (312) 930-9119 or dwittmer@hntb.com, visit www.futurecity.org; www.futurecitychicago.org.

National Engineers Week Committee, a consortium of engineering associations and major U.S. industries annually sponsors the competition. Students from Chicago area schools will be competing for the top prize, advancing to the National Finals. The winning school will receive prizes and trophies for the team members. All participants will receive gifts courtesy of the Chicagoland Engineers Week Committee and local engineering/architecture firms. Dozens of "Special Awards" will be presented by Chicago's Engineering/Architectural/Planning associations.

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IN BRIEF: The **National Engineers Week Future City Competition™** each year invites middle school students nationwide to create cities of tomorrow. The competition encourages interest in math, science and engineering through hands-on applications. Registration deadline for Chicago-area schools is October 15, 2009. Contact regional coordinator: Don Wittmer at (312) 930-9119 or e-mail dwittmer@hntb.com, Visit www.futurecity.org, www.futurecitychicago.org for detailed information on the competition.