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## **Friends of BEST Receives Workforce Development Grant in Alabama**

*Grant supports expansion of BEST Robotics program throughout the state.*

Mobile, Alabama – November, 2010 – *Friends of BEST in Alabama* was the recipient of an Alabama Workforce Development Grant to expand BEST Robotics into 23 counties that are experiencing high unemployment. The majority of these counties are located within Alabama’s black belt region – an area known for its rich fertile black soil.

The grant includes extensive teacher professional development, off-season activities and mentor training. All of which will prepare teachers and students for a BEST competition in the fall of 2011.

A goal of 12 schools to participate in off-season activities was not only met, but was exceeded. Forty-eight (48) middle and high schools expressed interest and was eager to become involved. A second grant was submitted allowing *Friends of BEST in Alabama* to increase the number of participating schools to twenty-four (24).

Professional development for teachers will be hosted in Selma, AL at Wallace Community College and in Macon County at Tuskegee University. An off-season robotics competition will take place on March 19<sup>th</sup> in Selma, AL. Community leaders throughout the black belt are extremely excited to see their students taking a giant leap into the world of technology and robotics.

The ultimate goal of the BEST Expansion Grant is to “build” BEST communities that are sustainable. *Friends of BEST in Alabama* will partner industry and business with participating schools to increase the educational and workforce development elements associated with the BEST program. This grant will allow a “pipeline” between K-12, higher education and business/industry to be built using a robot as the vehicle.