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ALL-EARTH ECOBOT CHALLENGE NAMED FINALIST IN THE ECOVISIONARY AWARDS
Wednesday, March 9, 2011 – Loews Miami Beach Hotel & Convention Center

HOUSTON – March 2, 2011 – The First Annual EcoVisonary Awards creator, **Kurt Morrow**, announced that the **All-Earth EcoBot Challenge** is one of two non-profits included as a finalist in this initial awards program. The awards ceremony will take place next week at the **Loews Miami Beach Hotel and Convention Center**.

What began as a “great idea” scribbled on a napkin in the summer of 2008, fueled by a collection of innovative teachers, small business owners and a Foundation, *became* the **All-Earth EcoBot Challenge**. Visionary, **Donna Cole**, a 30-year veteran entrepreneur in the chemical industry, understood the global implications for the next generation if we failed to teach environmental responsibility and encourage innovative thinking and problem-solving to those on the cusp of major career decisions...middle-school children. In the Challenge's first year, Donna enlisted her friends, colleagues and staff to join forces with the Education Foundation of Harris County and *CASE*, a division of the Harris County Department of Education, to design a workforce development competition open to all 5th-8th graders *free of charge*. This competition would inspire interest in pursuing S.T.E.M. careers and developing global solutions for environmental problems *using real robots*. Although only 54 local, four-person teams participated, the 2009 Challenge earned significant recognition, garnering the prestigious *Leadership Houston Award* in Science and Technology and establishing a following of robotics teachers and eager students.

Despite the economic downturn, the Foundation convinced NRG/Reliant Energy, then developing an electric car, to provide a \$100,000 sponsorship, opening the competition statewide in 2010. In nearby Humble, Texas, Waste Management, Inc. underwrote robots for an entire school district — 125 teams. EcoBot grants delivered 60 free robots to needy teams through this informal public/private partnership, growing the competition to 280 teams in just one year. Key executives from NRG/Reliant and other

sponsoring companies, including Reliant's president **Jason Few**, were "hands on" with the project, serving as judges and offering insight on the "real world" value of the EcoBot experience.

"The **All- Earth Ecobot Challenge** is an innovative workforce development competition in which 5th thru 8th graders develop critical thinking skills practicing engineering, architecture and programming while learning to re-use, reduce and recycle - using autonomous robots! Fun, scalable and replicable, competitors experience the usefulness and applicability of education. The challenge is a green bullet of the first order in re-igniting American ingenuity and prowess on a mass, peer group level", states **Douglas H. Kleiner**, President/CEO of the Education Foundation of Harris County.

The **2011 All-Earth Ecobot Challenge** is set for **April 16, 2011** on the campus of the **University of Houston**. Due to the exponential growth of the EcoBot Challenge, Harris County Department of Education has assigned a full-time staffer, and organizers are developing pre-qualification rounds to manage participation levels. And with 4th graders clamoring to get in the door, they will be competing in the marketing part of the competition to prepare them for robotics in 2012.

EcoVisionary Awards (EVA for short) was the brainchild of **Kurt Morrow** who has a storied history as a developer of many successful businesses, and now applies his extraordinary effort to the environmental arena. Mr. Morrow is a Certified Green Consultant and director for the Green Business League. He has taken on the task of discovering and promoting industry leaders who will break the ground that others will follow. The **2011 EcoVisionary Awards** will be the very first event of its type and will draw participants from across the country and various parts of the world. In addition, this program combines a workshop/seminar approach that allows all attendees to learn the key principles for the development of an authentically Green business.

The **All-Earth Ecobot Challenge** connects 5th through 8th graders to the future of commerce and industry in our region. Students build, program and operate autonomous robots to accomplish tasks related to energy generation, conservation and the environment; in the twinned marketing challenge, Ecobot teams propose and defend original business plans involving robots. **Harris County Department of Education** is pleased to be a sponsor **The All-Earth Ecobot Challenge**. The event is family friendly and free for youth based in Harris County, Texas. **For photos go to <http://www.ecobotchallenge.com/event>**

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