THE ELLIS SCHOOL WINS 13TH ANNUAL PITTSBURGH REGIONAL FUTURE CITY COMPETITION

STUDENTS DESIGN SYSTEMS FOR ENERGY USE IN THE FUTURE

PITTSBURGH, Jan. 21, 2012 — For the second consecutive year, The Ellis School’s team of middle school students won first place honors in today’s Pittsburgh Regional Future City Competition, sponsored by Carnegie Science Center and the Engineers’ Society of Western Pennsylvania.

The team won a trip to the 19th annual Future City National Finals in Washington, D.C., February 19-25, 2012 (during National Engineers Week), where they will compete with the winners from 36 other regional competitions. National grand prize is a trip to U.S. Space Camp in Huntsville, Ala., provided by National Finals Host Bentley Systems, Inc.

Each year, Future City presents themes that highlight a current issue and asks kids to investigate and come up with solutions. Students start with a research essay describing their concept, then to write a City Narrative outlining the key features of their city. Participants in this year’s Future City Competition designed innovative, forward-looking cities that seek to meet the energy needs of the future. The students proposed, designed, and developed the supporting infrastructure – both virtual and physical – that would be integral to generating that energy. Participating students used SimCity™ 4 Deluxe software to design a virtual Future City model incorporating their ideas. Then they built a physical model using recycled materials at a cost of no more than $100. Students also wrote brief abstracts describing their city and presented and defended their designs before a panel of engineer judges who tested the depth of the teams’ knowledge.

The Ellis School, located in the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh, was represented by Lauren Drake, Gigi Nieson, and Isabel Brooke. Advising the team were teacher Karen Compton and volunteer mentor Frank Sidari, an engineer. They created New City, a new Los Angeles replacing the 22nd century’s hopelessly polluted LA. In the team’s highly imaginative design,
New City, also called De Las Cenizas, or “from the ashes,” gets power from artificial photosynthesis using ocean water and removes carbon dioxide from the air. This power source is supplemented by a hydrogen plant, with backup from solar panels. Homes have rooftop farms with tax incentives for residents to grow produce. An underground maglev transport people and freight, while on the surface transportation features hovercraft, along with walking/ biking paths. All power lines are underground, and all buildings use rubber bases for earthquake protection.

Verna Montessori School, located in Mount Pleasant, Pa., won second prize in this year’s competition. Fort Couch Middle School, of Upper St. Clair, Pa., placed third.

Winning fourth place was a homeschool group that had never before competed, the South Hills Catholic Homeschoolers. St. Bede School, of Pittsburgh’s Point Breeze neighborhood, placed fifth. Pittsburgh Carmalt Academy of Science and Technology won the “Students’ Choice” award for the most popular city based on polling of participating students from all of the schools. Propel Homestead Charter School won the drawing for a free field trip to Carnegie Science Center.

Students begin their projects early in the school year; the registration deadline is in mid-October. As of Friday, 24 schools were prepared to compete, a significant increase from the 19 participating schools last year; however, seven of this year’s competitors were unable to travel to Pittsburgh because of the weather. “All of the students who participated are winners, whether or not they were able to be onsite today,” said Carol Schoemer, Carnegie Science Center staff educator and Future City Competition regional coordinator. “They all did an amazing job, and it was inspiring to see their work. We are all rooting for The Ellis School to take the national championship.”

The Pittsburgh Regional Future City Competition is presented annually by Carnegie Science Center, as a program of the Chevron Center for STEM Education and Career Development, and the Engineers’ Society of Western Pennsylvania, and is sponsored in part by Shell Oil Company.

Participating Schools at Today’s Competition
Beaver Falls Middle School
About Carnegie Science Center
Carnegie Science Center is dedicated to inspiring learning and curiosity by connecting science and technology with everyday life. By making science both relevant and fun, the Science Center’s goal is to increase science literacy in the region and motivate young people to seek careers in science and technology. One of the four Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh, the Science Center is Pittsburgh’s premier science exploration destination, reaching more than 700,000 people annually through its hands-on exhibits, camps, classes and off-site education programs.

About Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh
Founded by Andrew Carnegie in 1895, Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh is a collection of four distinctive museums dedicated to exploration through art and science: Carnegie Museum of Art, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Carnegie Science Center, and The Andy Warhol Museum. Annually, the museums reach more than 1.2 million people through exhibitions, educational programs, outreach activities, and special events.

About Future City Competition
The Annual National Engineers Week Foundation’s Future City Competition, for sixth, seventh and eighth grade students, is held from September, 2011 through February, 2012. The Future City Competition is a program of the NEWF - National Engineers Week Foundation, a consortium of professional and technical societies and major U.S. corporations. Major funding for the national finals comes from Bentley Systems, Incorporated and Shell.

About National Engineers Week Foundation
The National Engineers Week Foundation, a formal coalition of more than 100 professional societies, major corporations and government agencies, is dedicated to ensuring a diverse and well-educated future engineering workforce by increasing understanding of and interest in engineering and technology careers among young students and by promoting pre-college literacy in math and science. Engineers Week also raises public understanding and appreciation of engineers' contributions to society. Founded in 1951, it is among the oldest of America’s professional outreach efforts. Co-chairs for 2012 are Battelle and ASME. For more information, visit www.eweek.org.