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Contacts:
Byron Spice bspice@andrew.cmu.edu
Kristen Sabol ksabol@cs.cmu.edu

Consumer Robot for Autism Therapy Wins Top Prize In Nation's First RoboBowl Competition

InterBots of Pittsburgh Wins \$25,000 in Finals at Carnegie Mellon University

PITTSBURGH—A Pittsburgh startup, Interbots, won a first prize of \$25,000 for its plan to develop consumer robots that could help boost the social skills of autistic children in the inaugural **RoboBowl** venture competition.

Interbots was one of five companies to present proposals for next-generation robotics products or services in the health care and quality of life industries during the finals of the **RoboBowl Pittsburgh** competition at Carnegie Mellon University on Oct. 13.

The event was sponsored by The **Robotics Technology Consortium, Carnegie Mellon University** and the **Innovation Accelerator**. It was the first in a series of national “**next-generation robotics**” venture competitions intended to find and foster startup and early-stage companies seeking to develop products and services that address unmet and underserved market needs in targeted industrial sectors.

Interbots, founded in 2005, is a spin-off of Carnegie Mellon's Entertainment Technology Center. The company specializes in the design and construction of custom interactive characters – both physical and virtual – as well as control software, and interactive multimedia content. Its RoboBowl proposal focused on an affordable consumer robot and accompanying iPad/PC software that would allow therapists and parents to guide autistic children through activities that practice social referencing skills.

Another Pittsburgh company, TactSense Technologies, took second place and a \$10,000 prize. A spin-off of the University of Pittsburgh, TactSense presented a **novel tactile feedback system for robotic surgical systems**. The other finalists, Bright Cloud International Corp. of Highland Park, N.J.; Origami Robotics of Pittsburgh, and RescueBotics of Mountain View, Calif., each received \$5,000 prizes.

Summaries of the finalists' proposals are available at <http://www.cmu.edu/qolt/Events/robobowl-pittsburgh/robobowl-pittsburgh-finalists.html>

"We were pleased to be part of the National Robotics Initiative's inaugural RoboBowl business plan competition that took place with the "Innovation Accelerator @ Carnegie Mellon" event," said John Pyrovolakis, founder and CEO of Innovation Accelerator. "These competitions will create new business ideas for commercial robotics applications, with other ones to follow in the areas of manufacturing robotics, infrastructure and environmental robotics, and education robotics."

The judges for the final round competition were **Pyrovolakis; Helen Greiner**, president and CEO CyPhyWorks, president and CEO, Robotics Technology Consortium, iRobot co-founder; **Nathan Harding**, co-founder and CTO, Berkeley Bionics; **Venetia Kontogouris**, senior managing director, Trident Venture Capital;

Rich Lunak, president and CEO, Innovation Works; **Steven S. Martin**, president and CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska; and **Frank DiMeo**, vice president, Technical Staff, Physical & Biological Technologies Practice, In-Q-Tel.

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*RoboBowl Pittsburgh www.qolt.org/robobowl is the first of what is expected to be a series of new venture competitions intended to find and foster start-up and early-stage companies seeking to develop products and services in healthcare, manufacturing, national defense, education, and other domains based on **next-generation robotics** technology. The inaugural RoboBowl competition in Pittsburgh is focused on U.S.-based start-up or early-stage business with an idea or concept for using next-generation robotics technology to develop and bring to market a compelling product or service that addresses unmet or underserved needs in the healthcare and quality of life industries. Future RoboBowl competitions are expected to take place in various locations across the U.S. and focus on next-generation robotics technology solutions in other domains in addition to healthcare and quality of life, including manufacturing and logistics, national defense, homeland security, civil infrastructure, energy, transportation, and field industries such as agriculture and mining.*

*The **Robotics Technology Consortium** is a non-profit industry organization created to speed the transition and deployment of robotics technology for the Defense Department and other Government organizations. The consortium was established to meet a need identified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense Joint Ground Robotics Enterprise (OSD/JGRE). The RTC currently has a membership of over 150 large and small commercial companies, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations. The RTC seeks to solicit and engage companies and organizations that may not have historically performed work for the Defense Department and other Government organizations in addition to traditional defense contractors.*

*The **Innovation Accelerator** is the private side of a public-private partnership with a Federal Agency of the United States of America. The Innovation Accelerator's mission is to promote our nation's economic competitiveness in the global economy by promoting our nation's innovation. The Innovation Accelerator has attracted over \$100 million into SBIR recipients over the past two years, and has previously conducted Innovation summits at MIT and Stanford.*

***Carnegie Mellon University** is a private, internationally ranked research university with programs in areas ranging from science, technology and business, to public policy, the humanities and the arts. More than 11,000 students in the university's seven schools and colleges benefit from a small student-to-faculty ratio and an education characterized by its focus on creating and implementing solutions for real problems, interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. A global university, Carnegie Mellon's main campus in the United States is in Pittsburgh, Pa. It has campuses in California's Silicon Valley and Qatar, and programs in Asia, Australia, Europe and Mexico. The university is in the midst of a \$1 billion fundraising campaign, titled "Inspire Innovation: The Campaign for Carnegie Mellon University," which aims to build its endowment, support faculty, students and innovative research, and enhance the physical campus with equipment and facility improvements.*

***Next-generation robotics** encompasses and integrates a broad array of actuation, electronic, sensor, software, man-machine interface, and other enabling technologies to produce intelligent, networked devices, platforms, vehicles, and other products that operate with ever-increasing levels of autonomy. Next-gen robotics products and applications function as intelligent co-workers, co-inhabitants, and co-protectors in dynamic, dangerous, and/or inaccessible environments, reducing the need for tedious human attention, interaction, and intervention. Next-gen robotics solutions enable individuals to concentrate on the higher-level and more important aspects of their lives and jobs, to multi-task more effectively, and to work at a safe distance when needed. No other technology has the potential to address such a diverse set of critical needs facing our nation, including reinvigorating the US manufacturing base, reducing healthcare costs, protecting our citizens, inspiring our youth to pursue STEM-related careers, caring for our aging population, and enabling people with disabilities to lead normal and productive lives.*