



**PRESS RELEASE**

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*Sparkling Innovation*

## **JCOBA-NY Lauds Crowning Achievement in Jamaican Robotics Historic FIRST Tech Challenge**

National Robotics Championship launches in Jamaica

**NEW YORK, NY 18 MARCH, 2019** – In 2009 the Jamaica College Old Boy’s Association of New York (JCOBA-NY) introduced a robotics program at Jamaica College (JC) based on the globally recognized standards of FIRST® (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology). The ultimate intent of its leadership team was always to one day to bring the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) home to Jamaica. That 10-year dream came to fruition in spectacular fashion March 8-9 in the Karl Hendrickson Auditorium on the JC campus.

In 2010, JCOBA-NY entered the pioneering JC team in the New York City FTC competition, marking the historic entry of a Caribbean secondary school in the world’s premier robotics competition. Subsequently, JCOBA-NY labored for years with the FTC Jamaica objective in mind - organizing schools, educators, private sector, government and community organizations at home and abroad around the vision of a Jamaica National Robotics Championship. In 2018, the ambitious goal came within reach when JCOBA-NY orchestrated an affiliate partnership agreement with FIRST for the JC Foundation to be its Jamaican Affiliate Partner. To execute FTC Jamaica Edward “Teddy” Alexander was appointed Advisory Board Chairman and Gavin Samuels, FIRST Affiliate Partner Representative in mid 2018.

“In Jamaica, our focus tends to be on traditional careers. There is an incredible amount of talent in this country and our children love to use technology, so it’s essential that we provide them the opportunity to hone these skills and expose them to new, technology-based opportunities in the STEM area,” noted Alexander.

JCOBANY’s work in creating the foundation for FTC Jamaica extended to securing the initial financing as well as assembling and initiating a solid group of potential FTC-eligible participant schools:

- JCOBANY forged a partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information to support STEM education initiatives. HM Ruel Reid pledged JA\$50 Million in financing for STEM & robotics programs
- A Ministry grant seeded FTC Jamaica – enabling the acquisition of robotics kits for 20 high school teams
- JCOBA-NY led the critical work to organize and initiate schools on FTC requirements
- Over a 10-month period leading up to the FTC Jamaica National Championship, JCOBA-NY on-boarded and educated 22 schools to meet the challenge of the FTC initiative
- -STEM-related careers
- Recognized globally as the pre-eminent high school robotics program in the Caribbean
- Sparked national interest in STEM as a critical element to enable innovation and 21st century skills

“I applaud the leadership demonstrated by our entire executive team in the relentless pursuit of sparking Jamaican innovation. I also salute the work done by the FTC Jamaica local leadership team in executing a near-flawless event despite the many challenges that arose along the way,” said Carl Bennett, President - JCOBA-NY.

He continued “FTC Jamaica’s future depends on the support and endorsement of the local community. The entire JC school community embraced its robotics program, supporting it steadfastly throughout an astonishingly impressive 9-year campaign as JC Robotics racked up a host of accomplishments on the international stage”.

JC Robotics Program Highlights:

- Won 16 FTC international awards and advanced to 5 World Championships - including 2019
- Inspired a broad cross-section of Jamaica from their student peers to the Prime Minister
- Vastly increased the competence of JC students in STEM and technology-based applications
- Provided a platform for students to earn college scholarships and pursue STEM-related careers
- Recognized globally as the pre-eminent high school robotics program in the Caribbean
- Sparked national interest in STEM as a critical element to enable innovation and 21st century skills

“Given the remarkable success of JC, it’s gratifying that JCOBA-NY has expanded the pool of Jamaican minds invested in the global technology movement. This enhances Jamaica’s position on the world stage and boosts its place as a nation committed to technology innovation” said Lowell Campbell JCOBA-NY Board Chairman.

The Jamaica College Old Boys Association of New York is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, incorporated in the State of New York. Since 1990 the Association has supported educational, extracurricular and infrastructure programs at Jamaica College. We inspire students at Jamaica College and throughout Jamaica to become science and technology leaders, by enabling STEM & Robotics development. The Jamaica College Old Boys Association of New York also conducts community outreach programs in health, culture and sports in the Northeast USA. Our mission is powered by forging strategic alliances, through project fundraising and by providing technical assistance. **We spark innovation.** [www.jcobany.org](http://www.jcobany.org) // [info@jacobany.org](mailto:info@jacobany.org)

FIRST was founded in 1989 to inspire young people's interest and participation in science and technology. Based in Manchester, NH, the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit public charity designs accessible, innovative programs that motivate young people to pursue education and career opportunities in science, technology, engineering, and math, while building self-confidence, knowledge, and life skills. FIRST is More Than Robots. FIRST participation is proven to encourage students to pursue education and careers in STEM-related fields, inspire them to become leaders and innovators, and enhance their 21st century work-life skills. <https://www.firstinspires.org>