

Disney Cast Members Nominated for National Awards in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., July 19, 2011 – Five Cast Members from Walt Disney World® Resort are nominees for honors at this fall's Great Minds in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) conference. The event aims to promote STEM careers in underserved communities.

Cast Members from Walt Disney World® Resort nominated for honors include: Ivan Diaz, director of Parks Development and Integration; Marissa Suarez, senior Mechanical Engineer; Manny Dumas, manager of Engineering Services; Ricardo Lopez, technical specialist; and Sandro Freitas, Information Technology specialist.

Anna Park, executive director of Great Minds in STEM said the nomination and selection process is a very competitive and rigorous one, with a pool of more than 200 applicants vying for a handful of awards ranging from "Outstanding Technical Achievement" to "Most Promising Engineer or Scientist."

October marks the 23rd year of honoring the achievements of engineers and scientist as role models in Latino communities. Winners will be announced at the award ceremony in October at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort. Disney has sponsored the conference since 2004.

"We couldn't be more excited to celebrate these accomplishments at Walt Disney World for the second year in a row," said Park.

Committees made up of representatives from industry, government, military and academic institutions recently held a summit at Walt Disney World to select this year's award nominees, who represent the best and brightest Hispanic professionals and promising students in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

Disney's very own Matt Thursam, manager of Supplier Diversity, served as a judge for the Education and Community categories.

"I was amazed at the caliber of candidates and the grueling effort to choose the best of the best," said Thursam. "These candidates were Nobel Prize level in qualifications and all worthy. It was not only an honor to serve, but presented hope that future generations will be better prepared for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math."

Other judges from Disney included: Sol Fontanes, Industrial Engineering manager and previous award recipient, Irma Molina, Information Technology manager, and Tony Ramiz, team leader for Ride Control.

To learn more about Great Minds in STEM, visit <http://www.greatmindsinstem.org/>