NWACC SIFE Team Advances to Nationals
NorthWest Arkansas Community College Team Wins Regional

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (May 18, 2012) – NorthWest Arkansas Community College’s Students in Free Enterprise team will participate in the National Exposition next week in Kansas City.

The team earned the opportunity to advance to the national event May 22-24 by winning one of 10 regional competitions in March. The SIFE competition will bring together the top teams from universities and colleges across the United States to compete and showcase their outreach projects.

Nearly 600 universities and colleges in the United States and more than 1,500 SIFE teams around the world have participated in thousands of projects this year, and SIFE students have volunteered more than a million hours of their time to use the principles of business and free enterprise to effectively empower people in need by applying business and economic concepts and entrepreneurial approach to improve their quality of life and standard of living.

Being the best of 600 U.S. teams is an ambitious goal, but that is what the college’s team has been working toward. The team will compete with top SIFE schools to see who will represent the United States at SIFE World Cup in October when champions from all 39 SIFE countries will gather in Washington, D.C., to compete to be the best of the best, the SIFE World Cup Champion.

The highlight of the SIFE National Exposition is a formal presentation in front of a panel of business executives who serve as SIFE competition judges. This panel will evaluate each team’s 30-minute presentation about projects and outcomes, scoring them against the SIFE project criterion and each other team. Winning teams advance round-by-round to the SIFE Final Four where the SIFE National Champion will be chosen.
Under the leadership of Sam M. Walton SIFE Fellows George Tanner and Becky Hudson, and team president Robert Gearhart, the team has completed 12 projects in Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Cherokee Nation, and Guatemala and has improved the lives and business prospects for many individuals, companies and regions.

“We’ve worked hard this year to use entrepreneurship and business principles to improve lives and businesses,” Gearhart said. “Our team is ready for Nationals. We’ve used our talents and creativity to make projects work, and we are looking forward to sharing our story. It is never easy for a community college to compete with large university SIFE teams who have more members and resources, but we always do very well.”

The NWACC team has competed in several side competitions sponsored by SIFE donor companies. The team has already been chosen as finalists in two SIFE events, the Walmart Women’s Economic Empowerment project partnership and the Sam’s Club Step Up for Business project partnership. The winner will be announced for each at SIFE Nationals. The team is awaiting word on their entries for other competitions sponsored by Lowe’s, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and Campbell’s Soup, and the Jack Shewmaker SIFE Spirit competition.

As finalists for the Walmart and Sam’s competitions, the team earns additional grant money to complete their projects. The award-winning NWACC team is one of only two community college SIFE teams in Arkansas. SIFE is a global nonprofit organization. More information about SIFE is available on the web at www.sife.org.

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a comprehensive, public two-year college that serves and strengthens the community through learning for living. NWACC’s service area is defined by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education as Benton and Washington counties in extreme northwest Arkansas. The commitment of NWACC to life-long learning can be seen in the quality of instruction it offers, and the variety of programs it has designed to move students into the job market in a minimum amount of time, enrich people's lives, and prepare them to further their education. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.