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May 24, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ECIA Releases Latest Channel Channel Podcast: An Interview with FIRST® Robotics Founder Dean Kamen

Atlanta – ECIA Foundation Executive Director Debbie Conyers joins Digi-Key Electronics' Vice President of Business Development Paul Dosser for a thought-provoking conversation with inventor Dean Kamen on the latest episode of ECIA's The Channel Channel podcast.

Dean Kamen is an inventor, an entrepreneur, and a tireless advocate for science and technology. As an inventor he holds more than 1000 U.S. and foreign patents, many of them for innovative medical devices that have expanded the frontiers of health care worldwide. Dean founded DEKA Research & Development Corp. to develop internally generated inventions as well as to provide research and development for major corporate clients.

The shortage of engineers and STEM skilled workers – especially among women and minorities - is not a recent problem for the industry. Thirty years ago, when Kamen became interested in this phenomenon, many were complaining that it was because there was something wrong with the education system. His mother is a teacher and he knew that wasn't right. "I looked at the problem and realized we don't have a supply problem," Kamen explains on the podcast. "We have great teachers that can educate engineers. What we have is a demand problem. We don't have enough kids that want to go into STEM careers. They want to be sports heroes because that's what our culture values."

On this podcast, Kamen explains in detail how his wildly successful [FIRST®](#) programs have addressed the 'demand problem' by engaging with students early to ignite the inventor's spirit among young people all over the globe. These remarkable programs regularly engage with over 679,000 students, including many girls and minorities. The [FIRST® Robotics](#) Competition, aimed at high school students, boasts over 3700 teams in 110 countries. The 2020-2021 [FIRST® GAME CHANGERSSM](#) powered by *Star Wars: Force for Change* season offered challenges for all [FIRST](#) programs that immersed students in hands-on innovation learning. The 2021 [FIRST®](#) Global Innovation Awards will be presented virtually June 28-30, 2021.

Kamen also discusses the release of the [Christa McAuliffe Silver Dollar](#). "I thought that if we could create a coin that would be a national recognition of a teacher, of a woman that went into space, it would be the perfect way to demonstrate that we could inspire an entire generation of kids to appreciate science and technology," Kamen said. "We formed [FIRST®](#) for the singular purpose of creating inspiration in science and technology, and Christa McAuliffe the teacher is all of that."

"It's not often one gets an opportunity to spend a little time with an industry icon like Dean Kamen," noted Paul Dosser. "His contributions enhance the world. From his life changing inventions to



starting *FIRST*® and helping amplify students' learning, he is a true inspiration for us all! I'm sure listeners will be energized hearing Dean as much as I did in speaking with him."

To spend some time listening to this inspiring podcast, go to www.ecianow.org/podcasts. Dean will present a keynote session sponsored by [Digi-Key Electronics](#) and [TE Connectivity](#) at the [ECIA Executive Conference](#) October 24-26 at the Loew's Chicago O'Hare Hotel. Save the dates and plan to attend!

About ECIA

The Electronic Components Industry Association (ECIA) is made up of the leading electronic component manufacturers, their manufacturer representatives and authorized distributors. ECIA members share a common goal of promoting and improving the business environment for the authorized sale of electronic components. Comprised of a broad array of leaders and professionals representing all phases of the electronics components supply chain, ECIA is where business optimization, product authentication and industry advocacy come together. ECIA members develop industry guidelines and technical standards, as well as generate critical business intelligence. For more information, visit www.ecianow.org or call 678-393-9990.