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LEGO to hand out \$5,000 awards to creative youngsters

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Enfield-based LEGO Systems Inc. plans to hand out \$25,000 in awards to kids who can prove they're creative.

The company, famous for making little connectable blocks, said it is accepting essays for its second annual Lego Creativity Awards.

Five children will win \$5,000 each to fund personal creative pursuits.

The company, whose parent LEGO Group is based in Denmark, said in a

news release it hopes this will spur lifelong curiosity and passion for inventing and creativity among children.

The contest is open to children ages 6 to 13 living in the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and every Canadian province and territory except Quebec. No reason was given for excluding the French-speaking province.

LEGO wants children to think of creativity as being more than music or art.

For example, one of the winners last year wrote an essay about his invention, the "Great Granny Booster Step," which

he made to help his grandmother get into the family's van.

The essays can be used to tell how kids tackled a particular challenge in their home or community, or how and why they create art or build things.

Tarek Sobh, dean of the University of Bridgeport's School of Engineering, applauded the company for creating the contest.

Sobh, like other area engineering deans, has expressed concern that not enough schoolchildren are showing interest in solving problems or finding out

how things work.

Sobh admitted he's a LEGO fan.

He said LEGOs are great for kids to explore building and playing, but they're also good for serious pursuits.

"I have graduate students using LEGOs," Sobh said. The students are using LEGO robotic kits and assembling two robots that, the students hope, will be able to use other LEGO kits to build smaller robots.

For official contest rules visit www.legocreationnation.com.