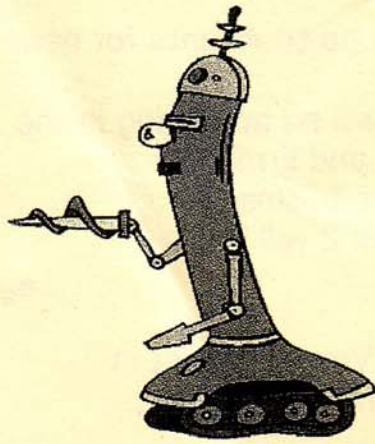


Robotics Team To Go To Nationals!



In December of 2008, a group of students, parents, and mentors met for the first time in the old high school shop to learn what was involved in being part of the newly formed Centerburg Trojan Robotics Team. The team was formed to allow Centerburg students to participate in a FIRST robotics regional competition. FIRST is an acronym meaning For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology. FIRST is an international organization that was founded in 1989 by Dean Kamen. The stated vision of FIRST is: "to transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes." The FIRST Robotics Challenge for high-school students has grown to 1,684 teams in 48 states and several foreign countries.

Each year a new challenge is announced to teams and a new robot is built. Teams are given six weeks to custom design and build their robot to meet the current challenge from a common kit of parts provided by FIRST using a common set of rules. The robots weigh up to 120 pounds. The Centerburg team attended a kick-off event at the Ohio State University on January 3, 2009 where the challenge was announced by means of a simulcast to all teams worldwide at the same moment, so that no team would have any time advantage over any other team.

At the end of the six-week period, the robot is crated and shipped to the regional competition site. Centerburg competed at the Buckeye Regional Competition on February 26-28, 2009 in Cleveland, Ohio at the Wolstein Center on the campus of Cleveland State University. There were 59 teams in attendance from several states, including Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, competing over a three day period. Referees oversee the competition. Matches consist of six robots competing on the arena floor. They compete in randomly matched alliances of three teams against three. Our team competed in approximately 14 matches. The top eight teams then choose two alliances teams to go with them into the elimination rounds leading to the finals.

FIRST Teams match students up with professional mentors from the community who have skills in engineering, construction, design, electronics, programming, website design, finance, and marketing. Parent volunteers also take an active role. The mentors work directly with the students to teach skills and to guide the process, but the design and construction is done by the students themselves. In the process the students learn to apply science and math skills. They learn problem solving and teamwork. There is about \$10 million in scholarship money awarded each year to students who participate, giving the students an added monetary incentive.

The team divided into subgroups according to interest: programming, electrical group, game component group, drive-train group, and the marketing and business group. During the six-week period, students from various subgroups met almost every night of the week, all day Saturday, and Sunday afternoons. There were many challenges and hurdles to overcome. The team had to raise almost \$20,000 through grants and donations to pay all the cost of building the robot, contest fees, and travel expenses. The students had to learn a host of new skills, from website design to handling power equipment.

The Centerburg team consisted of 14 high-school students: Abby Altizer, Graham Altizer, Austin Garber, David Hebenenthal, Kathryn Hebenenthal, Danielle LeChard, Michael LeChard, Alex Losego, Zack Liston, Thomas Liwosz, Noah Orr, Becca Trumble, Bryce Trumble, and Audrey Urban. There were also two middle-school students who participated in the process: Cresten Buzard and Willis Fannin. Mentors to the team were: Tim Garber, Janine Hebenenthal, Andy LeChard, John Losego, Joe Orr, Michelle Trumble, and Scott Trumble.

Our team, as part of a three- team alliance, was a regional finalist at the Buckeye Regional Competition. This was no small feat. We were competing against 58 other teams. Some of these teams had budgets in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Many of them had been competing for 12 to 15 years and had professional engineering mentors from world-class universities and corporations. Our students came together to become truly a team. They cheered and supported each other and demonstrated gracious professionalism, one of the goals of FIRST, by helping and supporting other teams. We were also the recipient of the Highest Rookie Seed Award. Our greatest achievement at the Buckeye Regional, however, was to win the Rookie All Star Award. This is the highest honor that FIRST can bestow on a rookie team.

As a result of the awards earned at the regional competition, the team earned the right to compete at the FIRST Championship competition at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Georgia on April 16 – 18, 2009. This is a wonderful opportunity for our students. They will be competing with the best of the best high-school students from around the world in the arena of science and engineering. All 14 students, most of the mentors, and some family members will be making the trip to Atlanta in April.

Our participation at the Buckeye Regional has been made possible through grant money from NASA, American Electric Power of Ohio, and the Community Foundation of Mount Vernon and Knox County. We are grateful to the AMVETS Centerburg Post 59 for their generous support. The Centerburg Board of Education has provided us with facilities for our club in the old high school building. We have also received many contributions from local businesses and individuals. We are currently searching for supporters to help fund our trip to Georgia. Registration fees alone are \$5,000 and travel expenses will be high. Any contributions towards our effort can be made to the Centerburg Robotics Team. It will be a tax deductible contribution. Contributions can be made on our team website or can be made payable to Centerburg Robotics Team, and mailed to the high school address: 3782 Columbus Road, Centerburg, OH 43011.

We are grateful for the support of the Centerburg community. We hope that our team will continue to grow and to offer opportunities to more students in the Centerburg School District. Please take a look at our team website at: www.centerburgtrojans.org. Wish us well on our way to Atlanta!

See Robotics Club fundraiser info in this newsletter