

LOCALNEWS

4-Hers shine at robotics tournament

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The youth members of Koochiching County 4-H took the MN First Lego League's Regional Qualifying tournament by storm on Saturday. Of the 14 robotics teams from across Koochiching, Beltrami, Itasca, and northern St. Louis counties participating in the tournament, six of the teams were sponsored by Koochiching County 4-H.

This is the seventh year Koochiching County 4-H has sponsored robotics teams to participate in the First Lego League program. FLL is an international program for 9- to 14-year-old children created in a partnership between First and the Lego Group in 1998 to get children excited about science and technology, and teach them valuable employment and life skills. Children work alongside adult mentors to design, build and program autonomous robots and create an innovative solution to a problem as part of their research project.

Partnering with the First Lego League not only meets the Minnesota State 4-H directive to include science technology, engineering and math, or STEM, as part of the county programming, but has also created an opportunity for youth leadership and volunteerism.

"In 4-H, we measure the quality of a program by how engaged youth are in the learning experience," said county program coordinator, Stacy Hall. "So when we have doubled the number of teams and youth that have been in a part of program for four or five years, we know that this robotics program is the best. But when our senior team members are serving as mentors to the rookie teams, youth leader are co-coaching with adult volunteers, and robotics program 4-H alumni are volunteering in different ways at the regional tournament – that's when you know we have achieved the 4-H Motto – 'to make the best better.'"

Hall said the competition season, which is eight weeks long, culminates at high-energy, sports-like tournaments. Participants cultivate life skills such as

More information

To learn more about 4-H in Koochiching County, contact 4-H Program Coordinator Stacy Hall at 285-0962 or visit the website www.4-H.umn.edu.

planning, brainstorming, collaboration, and teamwork, as well as research, presentation and technical skills through the project.

This year's challenge, "Nature's Fury," is a two-part robotics challenge based on mastering natural disasters that requires research to complete the project phase, and science and engineering to master the complex missions of the robot game phase.

In the project phase, teams were challenged to identify a community that could experience a natural disaster; identify a problem that happens when a natural disaster occurs; create an innovative solution that helps people prepare, stay safe, or rebuild; and finally, share their problem and solution with others.

In the robot game phase, teams confront some of today's natural disasters and apply robotics, sensor technology, and ingenuity to solve them. Robot missions on the FLL challenge table mats included both releasing natural disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis but also the after effects such as removing debris from power lines and runways, transporting supply trucks and ambulance, and delivering water, supplies, pets, and people to safe zones.

The FLL competition is judged in four areas: project presentation; robot performance; technical design and programming of the robot; and teamwork, with a consideration of the FLL core values. The FLL core values, according to a Hall, are the cornerstones of the program. They are among the fundamental elements that distinguish FLL from other programs of its kind. By embracing the core values, participants learn friendly competition and mutual gain are not separate goals,



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Koochiching County 4-H member Will Peterson creates a robotics display last week at the MN First Lego League's Regional Qualifying tournament.

and that helping one another is the foundation of teamwork.

LOCAL AWARDS

Members of team "Weather Busters," coached by Celeste Williams, earned bronze participation medals and the tournament's Team Spirit Award. Team members include Jayde Blooflat, Anne Frenzel, Breck Hensch, Malorie Grauman and Natalie Grauman.

Members of "Team Camo," coached by Jim Schneider, earned bronze participation medals and the tournament's Research Project Award. Team members Jessie Jourdan, Peter Schneider, Levi Lindner, and Alex Fahey are part of Northome's Northern Lights 4-H Club.

Members of "Wildfires," coached by Jennifer Brekke and June Wilson, earned silver participation medals. Team members are Jade Mcquire, Cullen Jensen, Ira Henry, Holden Sutherland, Gavin Wilson, and Jonathin Cairns.

Members of "The Stack-



Christian Hufnagle gives his robotics design a kiss for good luck. Christian's team "The Stackers," earned gold participation medals and placed third in team points and third in the head-to-head robot game at MN First Lego League's Regional Qualifying robotics tournament.

ers," coached by Eric Hall and youth leader Jayde Hall, earned gold participation medals and placed third

in team points and third in the head-to-head robot game. Team members include Thomas Holm, Asher

Belanger, Christian Hufnagle, Will Peterson, and Elly Nelson.

Members of the "Super Stormers," coached by Mary Ciriacy and youth leader Ian Ducharme, earned gold participation medals, the tournament's Robot Design Award, placed first in team points, second in the head-to-head robot game, and qualified to advance to the MN FLL State Tournament in February. Team members include Maria Hoopman, Kaden Bjorkquist, Erika Hufnagle, Rylee Kittleson, David Ciriacy, and Colt Dahlgren.

Members of the "Last One Standing," coached by Timothy Ciriacy and Josh Skime, earned gold participation medals, the tournament's Innovative Design Award, placed second in team points, first in the head-to-head robot game, and qualified to advance to the MN FLL State Tournament in February. Team members include Megan Herrly, Michael Ciriacy, Jacob Hufnagle, and Heather Hall.

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