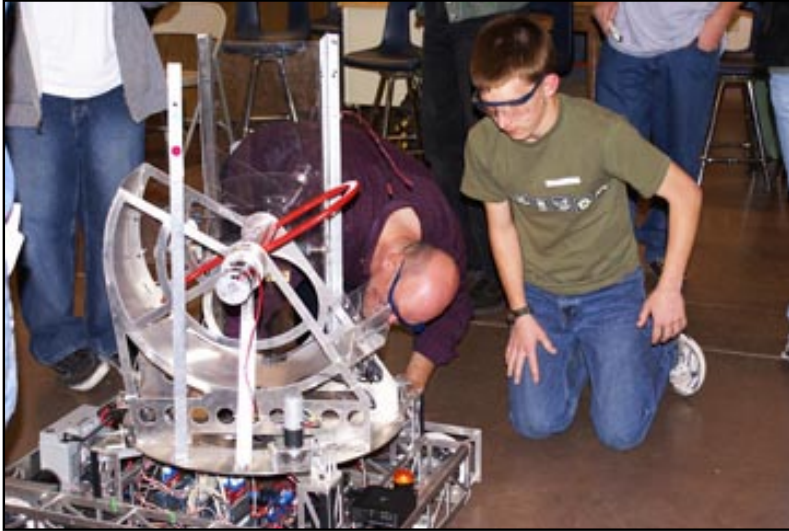


Mountain Democrat



Rookie robotics team hopes to win

By Laura Newell | Democrat correspondent | November 13, 2009 16:30



ADAM REIF, aerospace engineer and mentor from Pumpkin Inc., works with the robot as Sean Leapley, Union Mine High School, looks on. Photos by Eric Holm

Transformers step back, the El Dorado Union High School District Robotics Team is now in action.

The district which includes six El Dorado County high schools now has a district-wide competitive robotics team called the “Circuit Breakers” and they need community support.

The “Circuit Breakers” began meeting in August 2009 and will be participating in the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition.

“What makes us so different is that we have mentors working with our kids, so it’s a real hands on experience,” said Jim Beck, western regional director for FIRST.

FIRST is a nonprofit organization founded 20 years

ago for students ages 6 through 18. Teams work with mentors, coaches and volunteers to build robots that will compete in an international robotics competition.

“We get six weeks to build a robot that is 4x4 and 6 feet tall and it is designed to play a game,” said Charlotte Lindborg, team coordinator.

Currently, the “Circuit Breakers” includes 44 members comprised of students from Union Mine, El Dorado, Ponderosa and Oak Ridge High Schools.

Mentors

The team is mentored by an aerospace engineer from Pumpkin, Inc., two software architects and programmers from Intel, two electrical engineers, experienced project managers, experienced Website designers and a variety of parents.

To better work together and organize while building the robot, the team will divide into five separate groups with distinct responsibilities and mentors including the design group, mechanical group, electrical group, programming group and financial group.

“When I found out about the team, I decided to help out with the media and fundraising ... that’s what’s so great about the team, there is a place for everyone,” said Emma Holm, 14, Union Mine freshman and team public relations coordinator.

Get the kit

The “Circuit Breakers” must be registered by Dec. 1 for the FIRST Robotics Competition and purchase the “kit of parts.” If registered, the team will receive the “kit of parts” in January and have six weeks to then create the robot for the regional competition in Davis.

Recently, the “Circuit Breakers” received a donation of \$6,000 from Pumpkin, Inc. which will help the team pay for the competition registration.

“There are very few rookie teams that have accomplished what you just did,” said Beck to the team during a team meeting. “You have the opportunity to win a Rookie Award.”

An additional \$5,000 is still needed to be raised by January to purchase the “kit of parts” to build the robot.

To sponsor the district-wide “Circuit Breakers” team, mail checks to EDUHSD Robotics Team, Union Mine High School, 6530 Koki Lane, El Dorado, CA 95623.

For more information contact Lindborg at clindborg@eduhdrobotics.org or call (530) 409-4990.

Getting started

The “Circuit Breakers” founding member and leader, Torgeir Lindborg, 15, decided to start the competitive robotics team in El Dorado County after realizing the importance of the team individually.

“A couple of years ago, my parents took me to a FIRST competition at UC Davis (because) I have always been fascinated by technology but couldn’t find a class that involved it,” Lindborg said.

After joining a team in Elk Grove last season, Lindborg explained that he gained experience and knowledge in both running a team and competing, so decided to start a team even closer to home this season.

“Now I have really found a group of people who I can relate too, it’s great,” Lindborg said.

Lindborg is currently a sophomore at Union Mine High School and is working towards taking his driving permit test while also leading the district-wide robotics team. He plans to study software design and programming in college.

“It’s interesting; I’ve really seen a lot of people here that I wouldn’t have expected,” Lindborg said. “This team has really brought a lot of students together; it’s definitely breaking a lot of stereotypes against different cliques between us.”

Lindborg invites all interested students and community members to follow the team’s progress at eduhdrobotics.org.

“Even if you’re not all that interested, you should still check us out because sometimes you don’t know what you’re interested in until you try it,” Lindborg said.

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