

Robotics Team is headed to State

The Three Sisters Robotics Team (formerly known as Outlaw Robotics) earned a berth in state competition after an excellent performance at regional robotics competition last week.

This is the fourth year that the team from Sisters has participated in the First Lego League (FLL) regional qualifying tournament, held this year at Mountain View High School on Saturday, December 14. It's the third time they have advanced to the state tournament to be held at Lincoln High School in Hillsboro on January 18.

The team consists of three seventh-grade boys from Sisters Middle School (SMS) — Micah Dachtler, Cooper Merrill, and Lex Jeffrey — who have been working on their robot, programming, and completing an Innovation Project since September, when this year's theme and missions were announced.

The boys worked hard to get the bot ready; they struggled perfecting its back wheel, which didn't leave a lot of time for programming missions. While they were not in the top scorers for mission completion, their robot was very sophisticated, their innovation project was impressive, and they excelled in demonstrating the FLL

Core Values, all of which is taken into account to advance to the state tournament.

They are excited to have a month to improve on their programming and aim to double their mission score at state.

In addition to the robot and programming component of FLL, teams are tasked with finding a problem in their community and presenting an innovative solution to the judges. The boys decided that a problem that impacts them daily is the intersection at Highway 242 and Hood Avenue, which many kids use to walk from town to school and back. The intersection is foggy in the morning, poorly lit, and very wide, with long crosswalks. With new housing being built and possible relocation of the elementary school near SMS, the pedestrian traffic at that intersection is only going to increase in coming years.

The team met twice with City Manager Cory Meisner to discuss problems facing the City and then to propose their solutions before the qualifying tournament. The City heard the students' suggestions for better lighting, bulbouts that decrease the distance across the street to walk, and lighted stop signs.

During the project judging

at the qualifying tournament, the team emphasized that the most innovative part of their community solution was communication between the youth and the leaders who can actually make changes. Meisner was not aware of how many students used that intersection daily, and with that information he brought their ideas to the next City meeting and they are looking into working on that project.

Meghan Flaherty started the Outlaw Robotics team five years ago when her son Bodie Dachtler showed a passion for robotics and there weren't any teams in Sisters. Bodie helped mentor the team this year and also advanced to State with his First Tech Challenge team, The Quasar Alliance.

Meghan Flaherty notes that she has absolutely no experience with robots, technology, or science and won't be coaching in the future.

She said that if anybody wants to continue with FLL robotics and make a team, contact her; she says if she can do it, it must be easy, and they have all of the gear to pass along to make it happen.

Meghan and the Three Sisters Robotics team want to thank The Roundhouse Foundation and The Sisters Science Club for funding this year's registration fees. You can see the team and their robot at the Sisters Science Fair this spring. They will



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Micah Dachtler, Cooper Merrill, and Lex Jeffrey make up The Three Sisters Robotics Team.

have robot demonstrations, remote control robots, and snap circuitry for people to play around with and will be available to answer questions about the project.

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The Three Sisters Robotics Team created a sophisticated robot for competition, and earned a berth at the state tournament.

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