

# An Insider's Look at Vernonia's Robotics Program

By Garrett Mullikin

If you have lived in Vernonia during the past four years, you have probably heard of the high school robotics team. Vernonia's FRC (First Robotics Competition) team, 4127 (AKA, the Loggerbots) has been around for three years now. This upcoming season starting January 3<sup>rd</sup> will mark the 4<sup>th</sup> season they have competed. I myself am a member of the team, and I've been with it from the start. This is a reminder to you all that we need all the help possible to do this, and most of us will be going off to college next year. We want one last year to remember what we accomplished as a team.

The program requires a lot of resources. According to the official site (usfirst.org) it costs \$5,000 to register as a veteran team, and it costs \$6,000 to register as a rookie team. To go to the regional event, it costs \$4,000. And to go to the FIRST championship (which includes all of FIRST's programs) it costs \$5,000 just to reserve a space for your team. This is where fundraising comes in. Teams usually gain money via grants and donations. If you wish to donate, it

will go towards paying to go to the regional or towards obtaining parts for our robot.

Before you donate, I feel it would be a good idea to give a history of the team. 4127 was founded back in 2012, by Mr. Brookins. For the first year, we built a robot to fit the challenge Rebound Rumble. The challenge was fundamentally all about making robots play basketball. At that event, we were the most accurate robot as we literally built a robot that dunked the balls. For our second year, the challenge was Aerial Ascent, in which the challenge was basically ultimate Frisbee with the option to ascend a pyramid to score points. That was our most impressive year, earning us an overall second place at the regionals. For year three, this past spring, the challenge was Aerial Assist, in which a giant yoga ball was thrown around by each team and scored. To earn more points you needed to be more of a team player. We got into the top eight at the regional for that one.

The robotics program isn't limited to just FRC. FRC is the largest level of four programs all run by the company FIRST (For Inspiration and Rec-

ognition of Science and Technology). The lowest level is Jr. FLL (First Lego League). Higher than that is FLL. Then, a level before FRC, there is FTC (First Tech Challenge). This year in 2014, two FTC teams were founded. The middle school team, 9262 (AKA, Squirrel?), and the high school team, 9263 (AKA, the Redshirts). FIRST programs work by announcing a special challenge for the year, and it changes every year. The challenge the FTC teams are facing is called Cascade Effect, and the point is to get balls into tubes. The tubes score points per centimeter, with the shortest having one point per centimeter, and the tallest having three points per centimeter. FTC's season starts up around October of each year and usually runs into the January of the next year.

So now, let me introduce you to some of the members of the team. I'm the strategist and idea creator, and I expect I will be doing website stuff for us this upcoming season. Our main programmer (essentially, programmers make the programs the robots use to compete) is Jacob Eyrrick, a fellow senior. Our other programmer is Andrew Jennings. On electrical, we have Connor

Larke, and Kaitlyn Eyrrick. On fabrication, we have Nicky Rainbolt. We also have mentors guiding the process. Mr. Urban (grade school special education teacher) is our school liaison. Our mentors serve as teachers to us. They are mostly community members that have expertise in areas related to robotics.

The point of the program is to teach kids and teens the importance of teamwork, and get them interested in the world of robotics and engineering. I probably won't end up in engineering as a career, but who knows? Even if your child doesn't like engineering, I recommend they join any of the teams. There is plenty to do outside of building the robot, like fundraising and website design.

If you want to help out, donate time or money. It takes a lot to do this, and we need all the help we can get. That's not even mentioning the fact that if we win the regional, we get to go to the World championship (yes, this is not just here in America, this is all over the world). Qualifying for regionals alone is a hassle, getting to worlds takes a really good team. It's not about the robot, it's about the team.

FIRST recognizes team accomplishments over what happens at the regionals and worlds. The highest award any team can earn is the Chairman's award. The Chairman's award is given to teams who have the greatest

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# New Year's Resolutions

By Natassia Salinas

With the New Year arriving it's time to think about some New Year's resolutions. The New Year is a time of new beginning; a time to set goals. Your goal may be to quit smoking, or lose that baby weight. Maybe you want a new attitude or a chance to become someone new. But the New Year isn't just a time to better yourself, it's also a time to help better others or even our community.

As a student at Vernonia High School, my personal New Year's Resolution is to study harder for tests and to try to get more involved with school activities and events.

For our community, here are some ideas for some New Year's Resolutions:

*Get to know your neighbor:* While living here in and around Vernonia you may only be close to a small group of friends and not very open to making new ones. This year, challenge yourself. Get to know your neighbor. Maybe you're already friends with most of your neighbors besides

one family you don't see much. Invite them over for dinner or make a small gift basket to give to them. Getting to know your neighbors isn't just an advantage for yourself, it's an advantage for our community. As Jennifer Pahlka, founder and executive director of *Code for America* says, "When one neighbor helps another, we strengthen our communities."

*Become an optimist:* Maybe in the past you have been struggling, whether it's dealing with your debt or maybe the loss of a friend or family member. Maybe this year, you want to change your attitude and want to look at life in a more positive way. This is a chance to take all the bad things that have happened in your life and use that to your advantage and turn them into strengths. Developing your weaknesses into strengths can be a powerful motivator for change. Creating a different view on life, even when life isn't at its best, can help us appreciate it more and allow us to treat ourselves and others in a more positive way.

*Be a part of the community:* Making a local effort towards our com-

munity only makes all of us stronger. From organizing a fundraiser to helping with a local food drive, any amount of effort can still make a big difference. But maybe you don't have time, or are too preoccupied with your own life to make time to help someone else. Being a part of the community isn't just going out of your way and being a part of an event. Recycling is one way to make our community a better place. Just think if everyone made some small effort to improve the community how much we could accomplish together.


So what will you do in this new year? Just remember that a new year is a new beginning and we all can make a difference, whether it's for ourselves, our families, our neighborhoods or the community.

*Natassia Salinas is a student at Vernonia High School who is exploring writing for her Senior Project.*

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