

Vernonia Robotics FIRST Tech Challenge

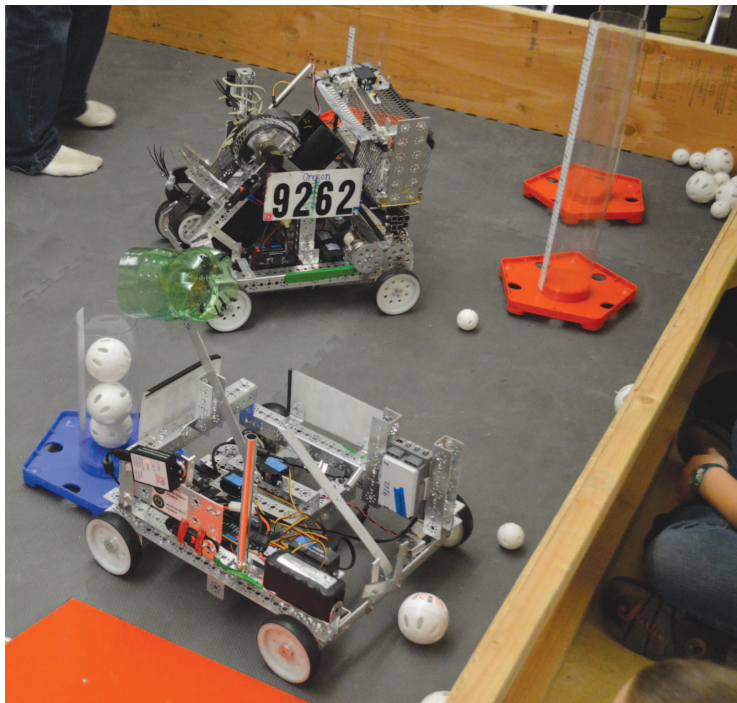
The Vernonia FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Robotics teams 9262 (middle school team, "Squirrel?!") and 9263 (high school team, "Red Shirts") hosted a

Community Open House on January 22, 2015 to allow their supporters and others interested in the program the opportunity to see the progress the students have made this season. Robots demonstrated their skills on a replica of the competition playing field. Students also demonstrated their 3-D printing capabilities.

FTC is a different robotics program that local students and mentors decided to participate in this year. It uses smaller robots and cost less to participate than the FIRST Robotics Competition Vernonia students have competed in in past years.

On Saturday January 24, the Red Shirts placed 11th and Squirrel?! took 14th at the final of three scheduled league competitions of the season. Squirrels?! won an innovative design award which earned them a ticket to the Super Regional on the weekend of February 21st and 22nd. "They liked what we did with our robot and what we did with our parts," said Squirrel?! team member and robot driver Lauren Ely.

Only the top 9 teams get to go to the Super Regional, so the high school team did not qualify.



The high school did face some tough competition this year including the team that won the worlds, (yes, the best team in the world last year!), plus another team that competed at worlds. "They were incredible!," said Red Shirt Kaitlyn Eyrrick. Against such stiff competition the rookie Vernonia squads did a great job.

Both Vernonia teams struggled with some technical, mechanical, electric challenges throughout the day. "As always, it is a hectic and time-boxed event that calls for quick thinking and adaptation when something doesn't work or gets damaged by other robots," said community mentor Jeff Ely. "I highlight to them that this is part of the learning experience."

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