

Robot: Team includes several students interested in STEM majors

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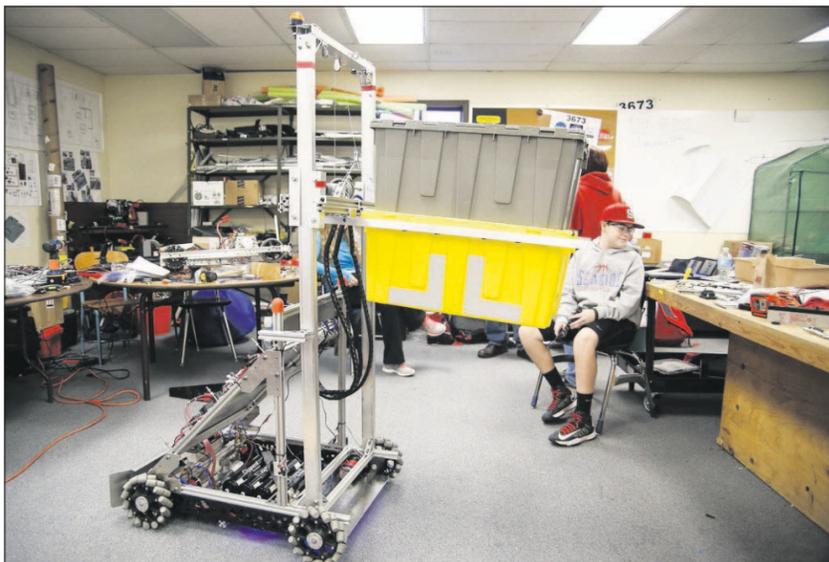
out of a math book, I can apply what I actually learned in math," team captain and Seaside senior Austin Milliren said, adding that he previously wanted to be a doctor or lawyer before being exposed to robots interested him in engineering.

The team includes several students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) majors. But it also includes students like Seaside senior Coral McNeill, who wants to be an English teacher but said she was recruited by Brown and finds building robots enjoyable.

"I've been vaguely interested in robotics most of my life," said Sam Daire, a home-schooled student who travels from Astoria to be on the team. His father, Joe Garrison, a founder of the Scorcher Artisan Cooperative that operates the Blue Scorcher Bakery, studied engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is one of several local advisers who helped the team build and program SARA.

Students take on different tasks within the CYBORG Seagulls, from the building of the robot and administration of the team to public outreach. Seaside Senior Savannah Cozart is one of the teammates tasked with forming a winning presentation for the Chairman's Award part of the FIRST divisional competition.

"It's just questions about how we outreach to the community," said Cozart, who, if successful in front of a panel of industry judges, could help gain automatic advancement for her team into the next round of competition.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

The SARA (Stacking Agile Robot Assembly) robot picks up cargo boxes during a demonstration at the CYBORG Seagulls robotic team meeting.

Pay to play

"We act like a full business," said SHS technology teacher Mike Brown, the faculty adviser to the CYBORG Seagulls who offers high school credit for students who spend at least 66 hours working on SARA. "It's a great opportunity to show kids how it actually works."

The \$5,000 the team pays to be in the FIRST Robotics Competition covers only a basic robot-building kit — a chassis, motors, motor controllers and other parts. The total cost of last year's robot, Milliren said, including travel to competitions and other team expenses, was more than \$24,000.

Brown and his students wrote grants between August and October and sought sponsors, which they've gathered nearly 40 of this year, for an operating budget of more than \$16,000. The sponsors range in size from small businesses, indi-

viduals and city governments on the North Coast to The Boeing Co., Halliburton and the Oregon Department of Education.

Expanding STEM

Being on the CYBORG Seagulls teaches mechanical skills that have to a large extent disappeared from schools, Brown said. "Over the last 20 years, it's just been going away."

But now the CYBORG Seagulls are at the forefront of a renewed push toward robotics in the classroom. Warrenton High School has a grant-funded STEM course building drones and underwater robots. A club run through Clatsop Community College's physics department competes in the Marine Advanced Technology Education's underwater robot competition.

The FIRST programs were started in 1992 by Segway Human Transporter inventor

Dean Kamen. In addition to the CYBORG Seagulls, Seaside Heights Elementary School and Warrenton Grade School have both recently added FIRST Lego League junior robotics teams.

Milliren, who helped start the team at Seaside Heights for his senior Pacifica project, said it can sometimes be difficult to have these programs get students interested, without all the advanced industry surrounding schools like in the Portland metro area.

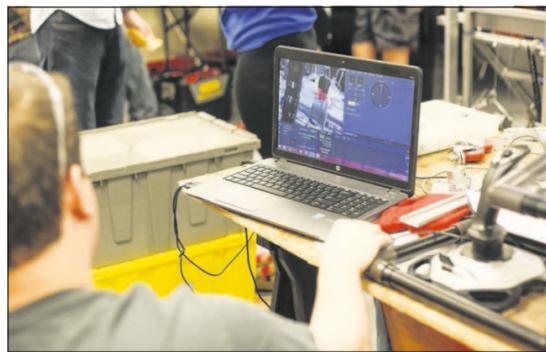
Astoria Junior Elijah Hirsch, said he only found out about the CYBORG Seagulls through his parents, who both teach at Seaside. The team has impressed him so much that Hirsch is currently gauging the interest in starting one up north.

"There are enough people up in Astoria who are interested in the science and technology area that it should be possible to get a club started."



Submitted photo

Teammates Sam Daire, left, and Austin Milliren put the Seaside CYBORG robotics team's robot in the bag Feb. 17 at Seaside High School. The robot next comes out between Thursday and Friday during the FIRST Robotics League district qualifiers in Oregon City. notforsale



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Riley Olsen watches the control software for the SARA robot during the CYBORG Seagulls robotic team meeting.

WINGS: 'It really made me feel like I had found my community'

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The right place

When she arrived at the free, one-day conference, in 2010, she wasn't sure what to expect. Quickly, though, Soares knew she'd found the right place.

"What really resonated with me is that the WINGS conference is all about reaching out to women from all walks of life. That made me feel accepted right off the bat," she said.

"A woman got up and was talking about being a single parent and reaching a kind of plateau in her life where she didn't know what to do with her life," Soares added. "She told her story, and I felt like I understood what she was saying."

The effect was profound and immediate.

"She told her story, and that's when I realized that I wanted to go back to school," Soares said.

WINGS encouraged Soares to attend Lives in Transition, a sort of sister program of Clatsop Community College designed to help men and women return to school after a prolonged absence.

"The classes they teach include stress management and life transitioning," Soares said of Lives in Transition. "It

WINGS CONFERENCE

When: 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, March 7
Where: Clatsop Community College, Columbia Hall
What: Explore your educational opportunities in this one-day conference hosted by Clatsop Community College, AAUW-Seaside and AAUW-Astoria.
Cost: The conference is free. Free lunch and childcare are provided.
Registration: Visit the WINGS website, <http://bit.ly/1DNO3le> for information and registration, or call Pat, 503-717-1852.

was like being in school, but it was also teaching you how to go through a big transition. You work through all of that, and there's a lot of trigger moments in the classes because they do focus on stress and how to deal with it and how to cope."

As well as helping her square away all the paperwork, — applications and financial aid — Lives in Transition also helped Soares regain the rhythm of returning to class. She got used to showing up a few times each week, on time.

"It was wonderful," she added. "I enjoyed it very much. Going to Lives in Transition made me look forward to going to school full time. As soon as I got about two weeks into the Lives in Transition program I knew for a fact that I wanted to go back to school."

Soares arrived on campus initially planning to study

criminal justice, but found social sciences more to her liking. She also found math rather difficult.

"I was really bad at math," she said. "But I had a wonderful math teacher, and I actually finally started understanding it."

At the time, nearing the completion of her associate's degree, Soares was also pregnant with her third child.

"I actually went into preterm labor and had to go to the hospital for a week," she said. Soares took her math homework with her, doing it in a hospital room.

"I didn't want to take an incomplete or anything and lose what I was learning," she said. "So I insisted to my teacher that I wanted to finish the class out. He was pretty shocked about that."

On to EOU

After wrapping up her associate's degree at CCC,

Soares transferred to Eastern Oregon University, where she delved deeper into psychology and sociology, and in turn, the traumas of her of abuse.

Soares had a hypothesis that a lot of the damaging effects on children don't appear until adulthood. "As children grow into adults, these effects damage the way they're able to function in society," she said.

She worked that hypothesis into a research paper, which became her final proj-

ect. It also granted her peace of mind.

"I used my experience to create data that can be used for people to learn from and with that came a lot of closure for me," Soares said. "That was one of the major things that was affecting my life."

"So the ability to go to school and turn it into something else, it has been major," she added. "It has made an impact on my life that I can only explain so much."

Nonetheless, Soares is clear: WINGS helped get

her to where she's at.

"Just going to that one conference, receiving the plethora of information and support and the openness, and how friendly and welcoming all the people were, it really made me feel like I had found my community," she said.

"It really made me desire to do more. Hearing those different stories and hearing that they had faith, it made me realize that I wasn't stuck and that my life wasn't stagnant, and that there was so much more that I could do."

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