



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Twenty-four high school robotics teams competed at Dallas High School's SkyRise tournament on Saturday.

Robotics teams on the rise

Dallas school programs catching on, achieving success

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — The Dallas High robotics Team ramRod experienced engine failure at the wrong time — just as it began driving its robot onto the competition field.

The team was one of 24 at Dallas High School's SkyRise Tourney Saturday and was sitting in second place before the second-to-the-last scrimmage began.

It was time to improvise, and the team did it to perfection, maneuvering around its dead right engine to complete tasks — moving and stacking cubes — and score points.

When the final buzzer went off, Team ramRod and its handicapped robot made a good showing.

"We still won," said team

member Jacob Reimer as he and teammate Jake Shryer repaired the engine before the last scrimmage. "That's the important part."

DHS robotics coach Lee Jones said the robotics program has come a long way since fielding just one team six years ago.

"I started with three students," he said. "Now we are at 20."

More growth is on the horizon, as LaCreole Middle School has launched its own program this year. LaCreole's robotics squads were part of 18 middle school teams that participated in a separate middle school tournament at DHS Saturday.

LaCreole coach Jacob Gradek said the competition was a good warmup for next month's state tournament. Because there aren't very

many middle school teams in Oregon's VEX Robotics program, all teams in the state will be making the trip to North Marion High School in Aurora March 7 to see who will represent the state in the national competition.

"It's a challenge every day," said seventh-grader Hunter Allison-Petersen, who with his partner Collin Graves, an eighth-grader, and their robot, Sheila, qualified for the finals round Saturday.

Both said their favorite aspects of robotics is designing and programming their robot. They said they were looking forward to competing at the high school level in the coming years.

Gradek said LaCreole added robotics to the class schedule this year and he is excited to see the enthusiasm from his students.

"It's just incredibly rewarding," said Gradek, who also served as the tournament emcee. "Seeing what they come up with, it's our first year, but it's great to see the growth in the program."

In Team ramRod, they have something to aspire to in the coming years. Jones believes the team, which placed well in matches before the final elimination round, has a chance to do well at state — and beyond.

Shryer, a senior, said the program offers more than just a chance to bring home trophies.

"My main reason for joining was for scholarship opportunities and it looks good on college applications," he said. "I want to be an engineer, so it's pretty applicable to my major."

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SCHOOL NOTES

Extended Campus meeting slated

DALLAS — Dallas High is holding an interest meeting for seniors and their parents regarding the school's Extended Campus program Thursday from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in Bollman Auditorium, 1250 SE Holman Ave.

Extended Campus offers DHS students a chance to attend one or two years of classes at Chemeketa Community College at no cost through a contract established between the high school and college. All participating students must have met graduation requirements to qualify for the program.

For more information: Dallas High School, 503-623-8336.

Budget committee members sought

PERRYDALE — Perrydale School District has openings for two individuals to serve on its budget committee (Position No. 3 and Position No. 5).

Interviews for the two budget committee positions will take place on March 9 at 7 p.m. The Perrydale School Board will appoint new committee members on March 17.

Applications for the budget committee positions are available at the Perrydale School District office, 7445 Perrydale Road, Amity. The first committee meeting is April 24 at 6 p.m.

For more information: 503-623-2040.

Lunch program seeking volunteers

POLK COUNTY — Volunteers are needed to prepare and serve lunches to local students during Marion-Polk Food Share's Spring Break Lunch Program.

Spring break is March 23-27 and the program will have 41 locations in Polk and Marion counties. Each location needs at least two volunteers to lead activities and serve lunches.

Volunteers are needed to prepare sack lunches each day starting March 22 through March 26, lead pre-planned activities for children at each site from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., and those willing to be "on call" to fill in for last-minute cancellations.

For more information: 503-505-1109; send an email to SBLVolunteers@marionpolkfoodshare.org; online at www.MarionPolkFoodShare.org.

Kindergarten transition seminar set

MONMOUTH — Family and Community Together will host a "FACT Transition to Kindergarten Summit" on Feb. 21 from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Western Oregon University's College of Education building, 345 N. Monmouth Ave.

The event is open to the general public and is free for family members. Admission for educators or professionals is \$25. The workshop counts for professional development units for continuing education. The seminar will help families who have children transitioning to kindergarten with an individual education plan (IEP).

Lunch will be included. RSVP for child care by emailing noelle@factoregon.org or call 1-888-988-3228.

For more information: 503-786-6020, ext. 308; www.factoregon.org; or email registration@factoregon.org.

MVCA missions project a success

MONMOUTH — Mid-Valley Christian Academy recently concluded its annual weeklong missions project.

The mission project was to raise funds for "Gifts from the Stable" through the national organization "Gospel for Asia."

Students performed tasks at home, collected bottles and cans for their refund values, and contributed their earnings daily in the buckets marked "pepperoni" or "Hawaiian" pizza. The bucket with the most money determined the choice for a pizza feed at the end of the missions drive.

With \$617.50 collected, Mid-Valley Christian Academy was able to purchase three chickens, two rabbits, two pigs, two lambs and a water buffalo for "Gifts from the Stable."

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