



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Ryan Nguyen, left, keeps time as teammates Kahl Murdock and Gavin Boyson take turns driving their robot during a practice on Monday afternoon. The LaCreole Middle School trio is headed for Vex Robotics IQ World Championships.

GOING FOR THE BIG ONE

LaCreole robotics team heads to world championships in April

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — LaCreole Middle School robotics team "Shift" didn't start this season with the perfect robot.

That wasn't a problem. Shift members Kahl Murdock, Gavin Boyson and Ryan Nguyen made continuous improvements in its robot prototype. Shift was on its third version on Feb. 27 when it took a state title at the Vex Robotics IQ Oregon State Championships.

"We've learned from many mistakes," Kahl said, smiling.

The achievement is more than just creative robot building. Teams are tested on their skill level in operating and programming their robot, their use of design,

and teamwork. Competitors have to keep detailed engineering journals and be able to explain their projects to judges during competition.

If that is not enough, teams are required to conduct a science experiment and report on the results to another set of judges.

To win, the team has to score high in a majority, if not all, of those components.

In a surprise to the team — but certainly not to robotics coach Jacob Gradek — Shift did, earning a trip to the Vex Robotics IQ World Championship in Louisville, Ky., in April.

The team still isn't satisfied with its robot. Team members did some research on their competition and realized it is going to have to

score a lot more points on the field to have a chance at a good showing.

They tested a new prototype Monday, methodically noting the fixes they will have to complete before the competition.

Gradek said it been fun to watch the team improve throughout the season.

"Clearly, though, these guys, as far as robot building, they don't need me anymore," he said.

Gradek is focusing on helping the team with other aspects of the competition — and raising funds to get the team to the tournament.

"Last year, the high school had a team go to worlds," Gradek said. "It's neat to see this team follow in their footsteps."

Ryan said he's looking forward to "the experience of going to a big competition."

Gavin and Kahl — who both want to go into technology fields — noted that college recruiters were going to be at the competition.

Gradek said he believes Shift is up to the challenge.

"I've never seen a team work this well before," Gradek said. "It's what got them there."

LaCreole has paid for the team's entry costs, but travel costs will be up to the students. The team will be at Wal-Mart Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 6 p.m. collecting bottles and cans.

A Go Fund Me account has been set up for expenses <https://www.gofundme.com/6c4r3w>.

SCHOOL NOTES

Nominate now for Teacher of the Year

SALEM — The Oregon Department of Education is accepting nominations for the 2017 Teacher of the Year.

The award recognizes an outstanding teacher as a representative of all the educators in Oregon and gives Oregonians an opportunity to share information on teachers who are making a difference in their communities.

Anyone can nominate a teacher for the award, but teachers may not nominate themselves. Candidates should be exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable, and skilled teachers who have the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues. They should inspire students of all backgrounds, play an active role in their community and school, and be poised and articulate representatives of all Oregon classroom teachers.

Nominations are open until May 13. For more information or to make a nomination: <http://oregonteacheroftheyear.org/>.

Hospital scholarship applications due

POLK COUNTY — Salem Hospital Foundation Scholarship program is taking applications for half- of full-time students in medically related fields.

Applicants must live in Polk or Marion counties or be a current employee at Salem Hospital, must have applied to a college in their field of health care study and must have completed all prerequisite classes before applying for this scholarship.

Applications must be postmarked by May 10 to be considered. Final selections will be announced by June 30.

For more information, visit www.salemhealth.org/scholarships and click on the Salem Hospital Foundation Scholarship link or call 503-561-5576.

Central High hosting 'Trades Day'

INDEPENDENCE — Willamette Promise, BuildOregon, and CHS will host "Trades Day/Career Expo" at Central High School Friday.

During the event businesses and schools will share information and educate students about construction and manufacturing careers in Oregon industry as well as other careers and jobs. Topics that will be covered include: industry exploration, applications, resumes, interviews and industry search.

For more information, contact Prindi Flug at pflug@central.k12.or.us or 503.606.2240.

WOU, teachers reach agreement

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon University and the WOU Federation of Teachers released a joint press release on Feb. 24 that the two had come to an agreement.

Both President Rex Fuller and WOUFT president Mark Perlman said they were glad to conclude bargaining.

"I am pleased that we have reached an agreement through the bargaining process and that the contract will improve all faculty salaries as Western moves to have its salaries reflect market conditions," Fuller said.

The faculty at WOU had been working without a contract since January.

ACADEMIC HONORS

Isham makes SPU's dean's list

SEATTLE — Lauren Elaine Isham of Dallas made the Seattle Pacific University 2015 autumn quarter's Dean's List.

Students on the dean's list have completed at least 12 credits and attained a 3.50 or higher grade-point average.

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