

Umatilla robotics team qualifies for global competition

Yard sale fundraiser is at the Umatilla School District Office April 16

By ERICK PETERSON
Hermiston Herald

Team Confidential, the Umatilla High School varsity robotics team, is one of the best robotics teams in the nation, by virtue of a victory at the FIRST Robotics competition, the Pacific Northwest District Championship this past weekend. Soon, they may be recognized as the best in the world.

Kyle Sipe, Umatilla teacher and robotics coach, explained their recent achievement in which 50 schools were involved April 6-9 in Cheney, Washington.

“The kids won what is called the Chairman’s Award, which is the award that, basically, is first place,” Sipe said. “All of the other robotics teams try to win this award.”

He added that he was very proud of his team, as they set this goal “a long



Umatilla High School/Contributed Photo

Confidential team members pose with a banner on Saturday, April 9, 2022. The Umatilla High School robotics team qualified for worlds this past weekend.

time ago,” and this team has accomplished it. What was a dream has become a reality, thanks to planning and hard work, Sipe said.

“This isn’t just a one-year thing,” he said. “It’s not as if we’re just doing good this year. It’s been on our program for a number of years. We’ve grown it up in the last 12 years to be at the level we are at.”

At the district champion-

ship, the junior varsity team was also in competition. That team was vying for Rookie All-Stars honor. The “training team,” as the coach calls it, is made up of freshman students.

These younger students did not win, but they were promoted to the Confidential team after the varsity competitors won the Chairman’s Award.

This prepares them for what comes next.

A unified UHS robotics team of 27 students will go to a world-level competition. They will go head-to-head against other teams from around the globe, starting April 20, in Houston, Texas. Competitors will come from faraway countries, including China, Japan and Israel.

Leaving on Sunday, April 17, a single bus will cart the Umatilla students and supervisors to Texas.

“We have, approximately, a 32-hour bus trip ahead of us,” Sipe said. The team will arrive on Wednesday morning, just in time for the competition.

It is the team’s seventh trip to the world finals, fourth to Houston, Texas. The team went to the competition in St. Louis four times when it was there.

“They do really well,” Sipe said of previous events. “This year, because of how hard they have worked, we will be able to compete on the world’s stage.”

He added, that it is not a common thing for him to say that the team has a chance to win the world title. Still, this year is special, he said. Even though it has never happened before for Umatilla, and it would be an amazing achievement, Umatilla students could become the champions of the world, Sipe said.

“I’m just confident that our kids are prepared. They’ve worked hard, and

they’ve built a robotics team that is the model for other teams to focus on and copy,” he said.

Win or lose, though, the kids will have a terrific time, Sipe said. According to the coach, young people are gaining eye-opening experiences. A trip to Texas, he said, will be a first for some of them; some of them have never left the region.

Sipe said in the trip to Cheney, the team visited a buffet. Some of the students had never eaten at such a restaurant before. Likely, he said, they will have more first-time experiences on the coming trip.

The coach said in addition to himself, his wife, Superintendent Heidi Sipe, and their son, Caden Sipe, fellow robotics coach, would be on this trip, too. He said they would keep a close eye on the kids.

The Umatilla School District Office, 1001 Sixth Street, will host a yard sale as a fundraiser Saturday, April 16, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Donations are accepted Friday, April 15, 2-7 p.m.

New boundaries set for Hermiston School District

Hermiston Herald

New school boundaries will take effect with the start of 2022 school year, according to the Hermiston School District.

The district’s board approved the boundaries at a recent meeting.

According to a press release from the district, the updated boundaries follow the passage of the 2019 Hermiston School Bond and the building of a larger Rocky Heights Elementary School and

the addition of a sixth elementary school, Loma Vista. “The two schools are larger, improved facilities and will accommodate more students, which will help to alleviate overcrowded conditions at the remaining sites. The increased campus sizes of the new buildings, along with capacity issues across the remaining campuses, necessitates adjustments to elementary and middle school attendance boundaries,” the press release states.

The release goes on to explain that the proposed boundaries were presented to the board by the district administration and the boundary committee, consisting of parents, board members and school personnel. The committee analyzed school attendance areas, population growth, housing density studies and feeder school scenarios. Middle school boundaries will be determined by a family’s physical address and where it falls relative to Highway 395, to the

west or the east. Desert View, West Park and Rocky Heights Elementary students will attend Armand Larive Middle School, and Highland Hills, Sunset and Loma Vista Elementary students will attend Sandstone Middle School.

“Adjusting boundaries is a community effort,” said Tricia Mooney, superintendent of schools. “Thank you to the boundary committee members for their insight and time. The team made every effort to affect as few students as possi-

ble; although, some changes were necessary to fill the new school and relieve crowding at the remaining campuses.”

Letters from the district went out to current kindergarten through seventh grade students. Letters informed each family of their child’s school for the next school year.

“If families have concerns that the identified school is inaccurate, they are encouraged to contact the school or district office,” the press release states.



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