SPOTLIGHT VIP

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PHOTOS PROVIDED BY **LASER 3284**

FIRST LASER ROBOTICS TEAM AND COMMUNITY ON A ROLL WITH *Go Baby Go Event*

1. A recipient and his mother are thrilled that he will be able to keep up with his siblings! **2.** Zane Foulk shows off the 3D-printed attachment he designed to help a child with dwarfism be able to reach the steering wheel of her new car. **3.** Grant Combs and Clayton Cowen work on electrical components to get a car ready to drive. **4.** Jada Rowe prepares setups for visiting Central MO FIRST teams to build. **5.** Melissa Stout presents a car to a recipient.

When a local student robotics group wants to help others in the community, businesses here at the Lake are more than willing to give and offer considerate support.

This past fall the Camdenton Laker Afterschool Science, Engineering and Robotics (LASER) 3284 robotics team coordinated the Central Missouri FIRST Robotics Go Baby Go event at Camdenton High School. Go Baby Go is a national, community-based research, design and outreach program that provides modified ride-on cars to children from birth to age three who experience limited mobility.

"When we heard that the Camdenton LASER team wanted to provide these cars to local children, we wanted to help," says Tom Williams, Lake Regional Health System vice president of Employee and Community Development. "We love the passion these students have for science, engineering and robotics, and it's wonderful that they are using that passion to help others."

"Through FIRST Robotics we have been able to do some extraordinary things," says Melissa Stout, 3284 robotics team member. "However, helping kids move on their own for the first time is something I'll never forget. Seeing the kids' smiles and celebrating with the families when they move independently is hands' down the most rewarding experience I have had the honor of being a part of!"

Lake Regional Health System was a big part making this project possible. They provided money to help purchase 16 Power Wheel cars and materials; plus Lake Regional physical and occupational therapists donated their time. They included Melissa Andersen, COTA; Danielle Heimericks, OTR; Courtney Hulett, PT, director of Lake Regional Rehabilitation Therapy; Katie Kelley, OTR; Taren Kirk, DPT; and Mitch Lucas, PT. Lake-area therapist Desiree Milburn, OTR/L also worked with young children who had a wide range of diagnoses, such as dwarfism, spina bifida and arm injuries. The therapists assessed the children's mobility strengths and needs, and collaborated with LASER coaches and team members to modify 3D print- and design-adaptable accessories to address the physical needs of recipients.

Other FIRST Robotics teams assisting that day were: Knob Noster-Stealth Panther 6424, Sedalia-Team SCREAM 4522, St. Charles-Lutheran Roboteers 4329 and Barstow-The KUHNIGITS 1939. The students physically adapted each car to the child who was going to receive it. The team members showed the parents how the cars operated and basic maintenance. Lunch was enjoyed by all before the big event – the reveal – the initial time the children motored independently.

"The reveal is very exciting, but also very emotional," says Lake Regional Occupational Therapist Katie Kelley. "For some of the children, it's the first time they've been mobile on their own. They push the button and go, versus someone else pushing them or moving them. It's very rewarding to see them understand, 'I just made that go!'"

The event was so inspiring that another local business, Scott's Concrete in Camdenton, is offering to match up to $5,000 to help fund team 3284's future endeavors.

Right after the event, Scottie Martin of Scott's Concrete visited with Brent Simpson, who is a parent of one of the car recipients. With excitement and gratitude Brent offered a significant donation from his business, LakeExpo.com. "Supporting these students and the program was an easy decision, especially after seeing the positive impact firsthand," Simpson shares.

Eli Mangone, 3284 team member, summed the day up well by commenting, "Knowing that our LASER team's hard work paid off for the kids was awesome. The Go Baby Go event made me and my team realize that there is something out there bigger than ourselves."

Q&A

Q. WHAT KINDS OF MODIFICATIONS WERE MADE TO THE CHILDREN'S CARS?

A. Unique customizations ranged widely, from adding supports to hold the children in place to relocating steering wheels, pedals, a 3D throttle lever to improve strengthening handgrip, and even a 3D printed extension for a child's arm for steering the vehicle.

Q. WHAT IS CAMDENTON FIRST ROBOTICS LASER TEAM 3284 ALL ABOUT?

A. The Camdenton LASER (Laker Afterschool Science, Engineering and Robotics) 3284 robotics team is the high school team, grades 9-12, that competes at the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) level. The Camdenton district also includes other grades with its FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC), FIRST Lego League (FLL) and FLL, Jr. divisions. Through its program's principles of gracious professionalism and extensive outreach, LASER continues to promote the message of FIRST on local, state, national and international levels. The mission of FIRST is to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication and leadership.

Q. HOW CAN SUPPORT BE GIVEN TO THE CAMDENTON FIRST ROBOTICS 3284 TEAM?

A. Financially, so the team receives the Scott's Concrete match, go to www.CommunityFoundationoftheLake.com under the donate tab and scroll to Scott's Concrete Gifting Fund. Volunteer mentors also are appreciated. Questions may be answered by contacting Sherry Comer, Camdenton R-III Afterschool Services Director at 573-346-9233. ●