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ON CAMPUS: Students, mentors forge relationships, confidence as part of robotics group

Building teamwork



Sophomore Conner Brady and mentor Jim Jackson from Lake Professional Engineering Services, Inc., build a Mini-Bot that will climb up to the top of a vertical pole in an effort to earn the team extra points at the FIRST Robotics Competition. Photo by [Dianne Steingrubey](#).

By [Dianne Steingrubey](#)

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Photo by Dianne Steingrubey

Mentor Former team mate Josh Hanna (graduate from Camdenton last year) and Conner Brady, sophomore work on designing a Mini-bot that will eventually climb up to the top of the pole to earn the team extra points at the FIRST Robotics Competition.

“It’s not just about robots,” said FIRST founder Dean Kamen. “It’s about building self-confidence, respect and important relationships with people who invent new technologies to make a better future.”

FIRST’s (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) mission is to motivate young people to be science and technology leaders by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, inspire innovation, and foster well-rounded life capabilities, including self confidence, communication and leadership.

The Camdenton 4-H Laker Afterschool Science Engineering & Robotics (LASER) Team 3284 met last Saturday to continue building their robot to take to the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC). They are in the fourth week of build season with only two weeks left to complete and package their entry.

The team has logged thousands of hours, building every night after school and the weekends as they only have six weeks total to take the basic kit of parts and the 180-page rule book to figure out how to design, engineer, build, market and program a robot to do a specific task.

“It’s pretty demanding to ask a student to go to school all day, they’re taking college preparatory classes, and then they stay after school for hours — then go home and work on homework, and come back to school the next day,” said Coach Mitch Comer,

Camdenton R-III Project Lead the Way instructor. “It’s great demand that are placed on the kids and what they have to do to be a part of this team.”

The team includes 35 Camdenton High School students and 21 mentors, including parents, teachers and members from the community who offer science and engineering expertise. Overseeing team operations and funding is Comer and his wife, Sherry, who is Afterschool Services Director.

“My favorite thing about being on this team is working with professional engineers that are in the category of what I want to do whenever I ‘grow up’ and just fabricating, designing and doing engineering stuff as a whole,” said sophomore Conner Brady, second-year team member.

Mentor Jim Jackson from Lake Professional Engineering Services, Inc., said he enjoyed the opportunity to see the students grow as they build the robot. Jackson was one of four mentors the team had from last year.



Photo by Dianne Steingrubey *The Camdenton 4-H (LASER) Team 3284 filmed scenes of the music video they are recording to earn the Chairman’s Award at the FIRST Robotics Competition. The Chairman’s Award is an award for exemplary efforts in spreading the FIRST message, as well as talents in organizing materials for their presentations. It remains FIRST’s most prestigious award.*

This year at the FRC, teams will compete in “Logo Motion,” a robotics game. Two alliances of three teams will compete on a 27-by-54-foot field with poles, attempting to earn points by hanging as many triangle, circle and square logo pieces as possible. Bonus points will be earned for each robot that can hang and assemble logo pieces to form the FIRST logo. Robots can also deploy Mini-Bots to climb vertical poles for a chance to earn additional points.

Mitch Woodside, a freshman, is a first-year rookie on the team but still undertakes an important responsibility of the build. He is the main CAD (computer aided designer) of the robot, prototyping the robot on the computer before it is built. Last weekend, he was working on the arm mechanism for the robot.

“I think that after building all this, going from brainstorming then putting it on the computer and then seeing the real thing, it’s going to be rewarding, seeing that I designed that,” Woodside said,.

Besides building, the team spent last weekend filming scenes of the music video they are recording to earn the Chairman’s Award. Katelyn Goodwin and Brigitta Reth taught lyrics they wrote to team members before shooting the video.

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FRC is an annual competition that helps students to discover the excitement of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) and the rewards a career in STEM can bring. More than 50,000 high-school students from the U.S., Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, Israel, Mexico, Turkey and the U.K. will participate in this year’s competition.

Last year marked the first year for Camdenton to have a robotics team and to compete in FRC. Due to late funding, the team had less than six weeks to build a robot that could play soccer to enter in the competition. The team won the Rookie Inspiration Award in St. Louis along with being on the championship alliance with team 1208 from O’Fallon, Ill., and team 2775 from Jackson, Tenn. In the championship competition, they were the 24th team selected (8 alliance teams of 3) out of 35 teams that competed in St. Louis. Being on the winning alliance qualified for them to attend nationals in Atlanta, Ga., where 340 teams from around the world competed. Laser 3284 finished 75th out of 85 teams in the Currie division at nationals after a horrible start due to reimaging their Netbook and had to rewrite their code.

The Camdenton 4-H LASER Team 3284 is funded by the Camdenton R-III Afterschool 21st CCLC grant and Camdenton County 4-H.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor for the high school, middle school or upper elementary school’s robotics team, contact the after school office at 573-346-9233. Mentors are an invaluable part of this program during build season and year-round. For more information about FIRST, visit www.usfirst.org