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What Are **YOU** Doing to **Change** the **World?**

Over 240 students in the Camdenton R-III school district are asking the question, "What are you doing to change the world?" These students are working to make a difference through FIRST Robotics (For Inspiration, Recognition in Science and Technology.)

Walk through the halls of any of the Camdenton Schools after the bell rings at 3:00 and you might be surprised by what you see, kids and a lot of them, engaged in science, technology, engineering and math. Camdenton's Afterschool program currently oversees one of the fastest growing FIRST robotics systems in the United States. In fact, FIRST headquarters in New Hampshire wanted to see the LASER (Laker Afterschool Science, Engineering and Robotics) teams in action so Vinnie Rodino made the trip from the East Coast to meet LASER team members, coaches and community mentors. FIRST included Camdenton in a recent case study of schools and will share the finding nationally in the spring.

LASER FIRST robotics was founded eight years ago and has grown from 21 students to over 240 in a short time period. The team has proven that rural teams can compete in this high level "sport of the mind" without large industry support and huge corporate sponsors. In fact, you could call LASER the underdog that keeps gaining momentum.

In their rookie season, LASER made the trip to their first regional in St. Louis and to be honest no one expected to bring home the Championship Crown and win Rookie Inspiration and a ticket to the World Championship. The team has not slowed down as they have qualified for the World Championship 7 of the last 8 years and won three back to back Chairman's award (the most prestigious award FIRST gives), are 7 time UL Safety Champions and have received too many other accolades to mention.

What Superintendent Dr. Tim Hadfield is most proud of is the fact that LASER 3284 embodies the ethos of FIRST. Gracious Professionalism is at the core of all things FIRST and LASER takes their role of growing FIRST robotics seriously. In addition to mentoring and helping teams the HS LASER team hosts three official FIRST tournaments and one off season event at the Missouri State Fair. Hosting is a huge commitment for not only the district, but also the Lake community. Hadfield appreciates the fact that the community supports robotics and sees it as a sport, sponsors tournaments and provides volunteers. Each

tournament takes 120 volunteers and we were happy that our school brought FIRST to central Missouri so other schools could participate without huge travel costs. The members of the LASER teams work hard to promote the program and FIRST Founder, Dean Kamen's vision. Dean Kamen, who holds over 440 patents, is the Edison of our time period and he challenges students each year to get other youth excited about STEM. The HS LASER team has helped to start over 65 teams in Missouri and Kansas in addition to expanding all four progressions of FIRST in the Camdenton district they have given over 100 presentations to promote FIRST and STEM.

The 2017 team is looking forward to the upcoming season and hope to continue improving and growing. In 2016, the team brought home the coveted blue Chairman's Banner, a Dean's List semifinalist, Kylie Becker and Finalist, Brenden Barbour. At the world Championship the team placed in the top three for Safety in their division and Brenden was named to the prestigious Dean's List, an honor only ten students receive worldwide in the FRC division!

The 2017 team is looking forward to the January kickoff to learn what this year's game will entail and what type of robot they must design and build to compete in the game, "Steamworks." Each year the challenge and game elements change and students must design a 120 pound robot that can perform numerous tasks, work in alliances of three with other teams, stay under budget, meet time constraints, rules, and numerous other factors. The team divides up into smaller divisions such as: programming, fabrication, electrical, Chairman's, safety, media, business plan, and scouting.

Every team member must do their part or the team doesn't see success. Each team member understands that they are making a difference one student at a time by mentoring other teams, doing community service and sharing their love of STEM. This will grow more scientists, technological leaders, engineers and mathematicians to help lead the United States in the future.



If you are interested in learning more about "The Sport of the Mind" and learning how you can help to change the world please contact the Camdenton R-III Afterschool Services office at 573-346-9233.

CAMDENTON LAKERS



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