

Blazing a trail to the future

Camdenton robotics teams compete in regional contests

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Lake Area



Camdenton High School 4-H FIRST LASER 3284 Robotics team is continuing a tradition of success.

The team competed recently at the FIRST Robotics Competition, Arkansas Rock City Regional, held in Little Rock, Ark. at the Barton Coliseum. There were 54 teams from 11 states along with three teams from Canada competing at the event.

This was the first competition for Camdenton High School's 4-H LASER 3284 robotics team since the end of the build season on Feb. 17. The LASER team had to fine tune and make adjustments during Thursday's practice matches and early qualification rounds. The drive team

performed well by making adjustments finishing the 10 qualification matches ranked 15th out of 54 teams based on average match score.

During the alliance selection, the LASER 3284 team was picked for the eighth seeded alliance by captain, team 2395 OKC 4-H Ninja Monkeys from Oklahoma City. The third alliance member was team 4500 Robohounds from Clayton, Mo. The alliance team proved formidable and surprised the crowd by advancing to the semifinals with alliance seeds one, two and four.

Although the robot and drive team fell short of winning the competition, LASER 3284 was honored with earning the FIRST Arkansas Rock City Regional Chairman's Award. This is the most prestigious award at FIRST, it honors the team that best represents a model for other teams to emulate and best embodies the purpose and goals of FIRST. The team secured a bid with this award to attend the FIRST Championships to be held April 22-25 at the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis. While at the FIRST Championships, LASER 3284 will compete with 100 other Chairman's Award winners from around the world.

The team also earned the Industrial Safety Award sponsored by Underwriters Laboratory. This award celebrates the team that progresses beyond safety fundamentals by using innovative ways to eliminate or protect against hazards.

The LASER 3284 team will be competing again in two weeks at the St. Louis FRC Regional held at Chaifetz Arena March 19-21. The event is free to attend. There will be 43 teams from three states competing at this event.

Two Camdenton R-III FTC Middle School Robotics teams also qualified for the regional competition held in Rolla over the weekend. Camdenton Middle School teams, 5907 and 5908, both competed against about 50 other teams that qualified from around the state.

“This is the first time we’ve run 48 teams through here in the state of Missouri championships,” announcer Tim Albers said during the awards presentations following the contest of robots. Missouri S&T has hosted the FIRST Tech Challenge since 2011. It has been selected to continue hosting the state championship through 2016.

Neither of the Camdenton teams advanced but their season is not officially over. In May, they will be demonstrating robotics at an event at Camdenton High School and one teams will be competing in Australia in July.

The contest was titled “Cascade Effect,” and it charged the teams with accruing points by using the robots to collect plastic balls of various sizes and placing them into rolling goals. Teams then had to move the goals to a scoring area. Each contest included a programmed time, in which the robots moved on their own through the use of computerized directions, and a radio-controlled time, in which team members guided the robots. Unlike an athletics tournament, no single team won the state championship. Instead, the selections were made for the the FTC Super-Regional for the North Region on the basis of the awards given.

The robots were designed, built and programmed by the students on the teams, which can have up to 10 members.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology), founded in 1989 as a non-profit organization, sponsors these competitions nationwide “to inspire young people to be science and technology leaders.”