

# Boeing involved in FIRST robotics competition

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ST. LOUIS - As the largest manufacturer and third largest employer in Missouri, Boeing is an important factor in the health of St. Louis, and the region.

According to the Boeing, the future of both the company and the region depend heavily on finding ways to close the knowledge gap between an aging workforce and the next generation.

One of the ways they are doing that is through the [U.S. FIRST robotics program](#).

As St. Louis continues to recover from the devastating effects of the great recession, Boeing is investing financial and human capital into the robotics program for high school kids.

"From a St. Louis perspective, science and technology is absolutely key to our growth," Val Bring, an employee of Boeing, said.

This year, the company sponsored more than 300 FIRST teams across the country. Local team 3284 the Camdenton 4-H FIRST Laser team is one of them.

"Without [Boeing], we may not have a team. A lot of the teams in St. Louis may not exist," Kylie Becker, a sophomore on the team, said.

Boeing employees helped the teams like Becker's engineer and build the complex mechanical parts and write the lines of code for software programs that run the machines.

It also provided some of the teams with the funding to attend extra competitions.

"[That] is a huge deal for a robotics team," said Matthew Bigge, another member of team 3284. "It gives you a chance to win a multitude of awards and recognition."

Team 3284 has done just that, winning multiple awards and competitions over the last 5 years.

But Boeing's investment in these local kids goes beyond the competition.

"They've also allowed us to tour their facility, where we can see real engineering at work, and where we may work in our own future," said Becker.

Thus, the foundation that may bring them home after college has been laid.

"This is a great linkage into the long-term opportunities for Boeing from a career standpoint," said Bring. "For the St. Louis area, this is critical."