

Robotics tries to repeat success

By Anna Plank

The First Robotics season at Allentown commenced with a bang: The 2018 theme was announced as Power Up. In the arena for this theme, the robot must be able to perform many functions, including handling cubes that are 11 x 11 x 13 inches, placing them onto a balance low to the ground as well as a scale that is seven feet off the ground, and climb a solid bar. Since the theme is based off of video games, teams can acquire power ups and level boosts by completing and excelling at certain tasks.

Following the kickoff, each First Robotics team only had six weeks in order to plan, execute and perfect its robot. After the build season, the competition season commences.

For those unfamiliar with how a First Robotics Competition works, the team with the most points (obtained from power ups, level ups and completing the tasks) at the end of a round receives two ranking points. In the case of a tie, one ranking point will be given to all teams involved in the round. Additional ranking points can be earned by teams accomplishing tasks extremely well.

The Allentown team is in the Mid-Atlantic Robotics (MAR) district. This district contains 120 teams and hosts six local events, the last event being a championship that only qualifying teams can attend. These events take place in the six weeks following build season. Since Allentown successfully created a Robot that qualified for the International Championship last year, they have high hopes to achieve the same goals this year.

The Robotics Team is overseen by its advisors and mentors, who act as advisors and role models to the team. The advisor is the engineering teacher at Allentown, Mr. Tackett, and the mentors are parents and community members, Mr. Kohler, Mr. White, Mr. Skidmore, and Mr. DiPinho. Advisors and mentors are only allowed to encourage and guide and are not allowed to intervene with the building of the robot.

Allentown has four different subdivisions of their robotics team, each headed by a different member. There's the Business and Marketing Team, headed by Elizabeth Olshanetsky, the Software Team, headed by Joey Sofia, the Electrical Team,

headed by Jared Skidmore, and the Mechanical Team, headed by Sam Kohler, all of which are supervised by club President Tommy White.

Olshanetsky, a junior, says, "Our business division of the team is relatively new and at first, we were not sure what to do. However, we learned more and more from our mentors and talking to other teams at competitions and I am proud to say that we have raised over 50,000 dollars through actively seeking sponsors through organizations such as NASA, Bristol Myers Squibb, DASH, and United Technologies."

Sofia, a junior, elaborates on his experience as the Software head by saying, "I get things from point A to point B; my main job is to make efficient, reliable code to unlock the full potential of the teams robot design."

Kohler, on the other hand, works on making and designing simple, fast and reliable parts for the robot.

Skidmore describes his work as such: "Basically, I take all the motors and electrical component and connect them using wires," which requires him to work very closely with the Mechanical team.

Mr. Tackett, advisor of Robotics, recommends the club to any kids looking for real life experience through working with peers, adults and timelines. Also, any students interested in software, technology, engineering, mathematics and business leadership can further develop their skills within these fields by joining Robotics.

Recently, the team was supposed to have their first Competition on the weekend of March 2-4 at Hatboro Horsham, Penn. However, due to weather conditions, the competition was postponed. In the meantime, the Robotics Team looks forward to competing this year and hopefully making a reappearance at the International Championship.

In the words of President Tommy White, "The team is experienced, well led and the new members are very active and knowledgeable in their fields. With our increase in machinery and knowledge, we are leading up to a successful year and I would hope we reach the World Championships. Last year, we weren't confident; we just wanted to qualify. This year, however, we're looking to get back to Worlds and hopefully get into the finals."