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Orinda all-girl robotics team makes it to NorCal championships

Submitted by Roxanne Christophe



Team Stampede (from top left): Sophie Davis, Alexia Gkatzimas, Grace Kosla, Trisha Madannavar, Lina Parikh, and Lauren Stuffmann
Photo provided

Team Stampede, an all-girl robotics team from Orinda, made it through a highly competitive round of the FIRST LEGO League robotics qualifiers and headed to the Northern California RePlay Championships on March 14. While they didn't advance at the championships, the team had a wonderful time participating. Made up of fifth-grade Wagner Ranch Elementary students Sophie Davis, Alexia Gkatzimas, Grace Kosla, Trisha Madannavar, Lina Parikh and Lauren Stuffmann, the team has been busy for the past year designing and preparing their robot and beat off stiff competition Feb. 13 to win the award for "Best Robot Design" at the FIRST LEGO League robotics tournament.

FIRST LEGO League Challenge introduces science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) to children ages 9-16 through fun, exciting hands-on learning. Participants gain real-world problem-solving experience through a guided, global robotics program. The program is designed to inspire participants to experiment and grow their critical thinking, coding and design skills

through hands-on STEM learning and robotics.

According to UNESCO, only around 30% of all female students select STEM-related subjects in higher education with robotics engineering being a male dominated field. These courageous young ladies are evidence that it may not stay that way for long.

"From where we started to where we are now, we have accomplished a lot. We have learned to always stay motivated and excited for what is to come even when we are hitting a bumpy road. Whether it is succeeding in a mission or finding what we enjoy, we wouldn't be able to do it without each other. During the process, we learned that even though challenges occur, the best feeling is when you stick with it and overcome the challenge as a team," said members of Team Stampede.

Team Stampede Coach and mom to Trisha, Deepa Bangalore, said, "It's so inspiring to watch the girls work so well together and pull for each other. Since the qualifiers, the girls have been on overdrive, and they've set themselves some rather lofty goals to make their robot even better for the NorCal RePlay Championship."

According to Team Stampede moms, one of the main criteria the teams are judged on is the FIRST LEGO League Core Values of Discovery, Innovation, Impact, Inclusion, Teamwork and Fun and the team hit the mark with all of those values.

The girls say they are thankful to Elise Chang of Miramonte High School who was instrumental in helping launch Team Stampede last year.

If you would like more information about forming a robotics team email Christine Gkatzimas at cgkatzimas@yahoo.com. For more information on FIRST LEGO League visit www.firstinspires.org/robotics/fli

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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