

# BH Robotics newsletter



## MorTorq Kicks Off!

January 22, 2010 - Vol 3, Issue 4

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BHHS robotics  
FIRST  
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The Muscular Dystrophy Association

### Greetings!

#### Important Dates:

February 23rd -- Robot ship date March 4-6th -- Portland Oregon Regional Competition  
March 25-27th - LA Regional Competition  
April 15-17th -- Championship in Atlanta

### KICKOFF 2010!



By: Lisa Bahadori

That time of year has come once again. On Saturday, January 9th, 2010 we attended the long-awaited kickoff. Some team leaders even woke up at five in the morning to watch the live kickoff at six. Some, like Evan Friedman ('10), made the trek to USC to watch it in person. Their level of dedication is admirable, and other team members are sure to rise to the occasion this year and next. All of us, however, showed up to Beverly at ten in the morning, ready to find out what this year's game consisted of. After a warm and heartfelt video of last year's team, everyone was pumped to start. The animation explaining the

game was put on, and an eerie silence came over Team 1515. We watched a short film clip that, while it was narrated by a monotonous voice, was full of colors and we knew this would dominate our lives for the next few months.

As Anna Khananashvili ('12) said, "this year's competition is different from anything we've ever done before." A game strikingly similar to soccer, "Breakaway" is played on a field divided into three parts. We ally with two other teams and play against another three-team alliance. There is an autonomous period where our robots have to kick balls into their target without any external direction. Afterwards the human controllers take over and the best part of the game begins. Robots can score a point with any one of the twelve balls on the field, yet the tricky part lies in the fact that our goals will be closest to us. Controllers will have to "score on themselves" rather than score on the far side of the field. When a team scores into the corral, or target, a human player will take the ball and pass it to a trident-wielding team member. This person, using the trident, will put the ball on the ball return. The field also has two bumps and two passageways, which the robots can utilize to move between the three sections of the field. In the last thirty seconds of the game, robots will have to hang off of cage-like structures above the passageways for two extra points. Any robot that can hang off an already-suspended robot will gain three points.

After watching the video and discussing the rules, our team eagerly began designing robots. We broke into groups of ten people to discuss ideas for the Team 1515 robot. During the thirty minutes of discussion time, it was interesting to look around the room and see students of the business, building, and writing sections working together as one to come up with concepts. It heightened the sense of family within the Beverly team and reminded us that although we are broken into specialized parts, we are nonetheless part of a bigger picture.

When the time came to present ideas, each group came to the front of the room and used the white-board to explain their concept for the robot. The other team members took this as an opportunity to point out flaws or parts that were not allowed according to the competition rules. Although we criticized fellow team members, it was always done with a sense of respect and love. Each group had great ideas, and the most prevalent model was one that functioned whether it was right side up or upside-down. This "reversible robot" would be able to work perfectly and lose no time were it to accidentally flip over while moving over a hump.

Kickoff ended with big smiles, good ideas, and above all, a sense of team excitement for the weeks to come. We learned about the competition, but we also bonded as a team throughout our brainstorming process. It was not only a great experience, but also a huge inspiration for FRC 2010. In the words of team leader Matt Foreman ('11): "Get ready to win!"

## VEX Robotics

By: Jason Friedman

Upon entering the robotics program at Beverly most of the newcomers knew little to nothing about how to build robots. Some new team members were unsure that they were adequate enough to serve on a team that had such knowledgeable and devoted members. Others were excited to be a member of MorTorq and were ready to share their input. Regardless, the new MorTorq team members have greatly benefited from the robotics experience by learning and building on the VEX platform. They learned to think logically and strategically in designing a robot, learned to use tools safely, and most importantly, learned how to work as a team. Through designing and building the VEX robot not only did the new members learn a lot, they also discovered the importance and power of teamwork.

As a VEX builder myself, I found that building a robot is clearly a team effort. I came to know and befriend the other VEX builders. VEX itself has helped me tremendously in terms of understanding robotics. Although the VEX parts are far more simple than those of the FRC competition (our biggest competition of the season, VEX showed me the long amount



of time and dedication it takes to build a robot, even if it is a simple design. To sum it up, my VEX experience was not only fun but also extremely helpful to us new comers as we enter the FRC build season.

## Happy Meals for All



By: Anna Khananashvili

On January 7, 2010, fifteen members of MorTorq made their way to the Ronald McDonald House in Los Angeles to prepare a "Happy Meal", a free dinner for the guests at the House. The Ronald McDonald House Charities are a chain of international, nonprofit organizations dedicated to providing for the needs of families with children undergoing treatment for chronic illnesses. The team prepared pasta, salad, and cookies and ate the Happy Meal with the guests. They played with some of the pint-sized visitors and were given a tour of the cozy accommodations by an employee. The House welcomed Team 1515 and everyone was very grateful for the Happy Meal that the team had such a great time making. The team felt an instant connection with the House-"I felt welcomed as soon as I stepped through the doors of the House, and I really bonded with the kids. It's so rewarding when you see the positive impact you have on people- - eating with everybody allowed me to see that I'd really made a difference", said Team President Jason Kahn. The whole team was greatly affected by the visit and everyone felt compelled to volunteer with the House again-a book drive is in the works..

## Mentor Spotlight: Colleen Rothner

By: Emmanuelle Hodara

On January 9, 2009, for the long awaited season kick off, MorTorq, welcomed back a number of its cherished alumni. Colleen Rothner, who graduated from Beverly Hills High School in 2008, was one of them. A two-year robotics member, Rothner was at the time one of the only girls on the building squad and was in charge of building equipments like crates and mock fields.

Now attending Arizona State University, Colleen remains faithful not only to MorTorq but also to FIRST Robotics, by mentoring our team and volunteering at the Arizona State Championships. When in town, she regularly comes to counsel us, especially the girls. "I know how it can be difficult getting out there when the boys try to monopolize everything, and I love seeing our girls take a stand" Rothner explains. However, she was glad to see an increased involvement of girls in the program.





Colleen is currently majoring in housing and community development in order to pursue a career in architecture. She would like to specialize in commercial building. While she has known her career goal for a long time, robotics undoubtedly heightened her interest in this field, and even gave her a head start from her fellow classmates.

Although she is returning to Arizona, she will most likely be back for the FIRST Robotics competition. Colleen is very excited about this year's "Breakaway" challenge and the robot interactions it involves. "It is definitely a crowd-pleaser

and will be very fun to watch."

### **Giving Back to the Community**

By: Emmanuelle Hodara

Giving back to the community is a very important part of the robotics program and team members are heavily involved in helping those in need. For the 2009 holidays, MorTorq participated in a food drive for the Aids Project Los Angeles (APLA). Students set up a booth in front of Gelson's, passed out a grocery list to bona fide shoppers, and collected canned food as well as personal hygiene products. This food drive was very successful and the Gelson's manager even commented on the fact that this food



drive collected more groceries than he had ever seen before at his store. During winter break, Team 1515 also volunteered at the Greater West Hollywood Food Coalition through the initiative of sophomore, Taylor Shaw. Students prepared food donated by local businesses and distributed it to the homeless on the streets.

Team members, however, do not limit themselves to activities only organized through robotics. Many students are involved in other community service activities. Sophomore Anna Khananashvili regularly works at the Beverly Hills Public Library and also volunteers at local fairs and carnivals, while senior Jason Khan works for no pay as a sports camp counselor during the summer. Senior Rebekah Stromberg participated in the Los Angeles Diller Teen Fellows Program on a poverty service group; she helped pass out hygiene kits at the Midnight Mission, a facility that uses a 12-step program to help homeless people to reintegrate themselves into society.

We are lucky to live at ease and it is our duty -- which we accept wholeheartedly -- to give back to the community and help those who are less fortunate. This year, MorTorq plans to expand their outreach program even further -- on a global level.

### **Team 1515 appreciates all the support!**

Team 1515 is grateful to be supported by so many wonderful people. Our program would not exist without the generosity of our community and our corporate sponsors. Walt Disney Imagineering, The Beverly Hills ROP program, BHEF, and all of our family donors. All are vital to our program.

Special thanks go out to all the families that have supported our team by supplying food for our hungry students.

We also wish to thank the people that give us support financially. Thank you to our major donors who are listed on our website!

New sletter Edited by Rebecca Stromberg

**Visit our website for more information!**

BHHS robotics is funded solely by donations, corporate sponsorships and fundraising. All business aspects of the program are run by the Beverly Hills High School ROP Entrepreneurship classes taught by Eileen Kahn. If you are interested in supporting our team either as a mentor or as a financial contributor, please contact Eileen Kahn at [eileenkahn@gmail.com](mailto:eileenkahn@gmail.com).

Sincerely, TEAM 1515, BHHS ROBOTICS

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