

# BH Robotics newsletter



## Ring In the New Year!

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### Sign Up

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### Quick Links

BHHS robotics  
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### Greetings!

#### Important Dates:

October 29th -- Normapalooza  
 March 4-6th -- Portland Oregon Regional Competition  
 March 25-27th - LA Regional Competition  
 April 15-17th -- Championship in Atlanta

### New Year, New Team!



By: Emmanuelle Hodara

The 2009-2010 school year is looking up for MorTorq, our robotics team! Although we will miss our seniors, who have gone off to college, we have acquired a multitude of promising new members eager to make a difference in the team.

Jason Kahn, Shoshana Young and Nicole Weinstein were in charge of promoting our club at Freshmen Orientation. Their presentation was a success, and they were able to stimulate over fifty

freshmen's interest in Robotics. The popularity of the program is soaring with all opened spots filled even before Club Week sign-ups. Interestingly enough, many of these new recruits are girls, nearly balancing the gender make-up of MorTorq to about a fifty-fifty boy to girl ratio.

In addition to the expansion of the team, MorTorq accepted a generous donation from the Regional Occupational Program to finance the program. Our team is also looking for new sponsors and new means of fundraising.

Facilities are also expanding with the Woodshop now available as a new

workspace for the building team. Mentors like Mike Gordon and Roy McKee have returned to assist us in training workshops.

The team is also taking a new direction with its charity program. This year, we are building a partnership with the Ronald McDonald House Organization, a program that provides charity housing for families with children who have been diagnosed with cancer or other serious illnesses and who do not live within the proximity of a children's hospital. Our job is to collect the pop-tops of soda cans for recycling, cash them in, and give all the profits to the organization. "We are very excited about this program," said Nicole Weinstein, our co-President, and "we are hoping to make this [the program] school-wide and perhaps even district-wide."

This is a new year and a new team and MorTorq is on its way to another successful year. Countdown to L.A. Regionals Competition on March 25th, 2010: 181 days.

## New Recruits - Welcome!

By: Leah Stromberg



It's always scary at first - walking into unknown territory. And everyone looks so serious. We're told to take a seat, so we do. There is a man speaking, and we go around the room and introduce ourselves one by one; name, grade, and what you're interested in doing in robotics. Some say animation, others want to try building or fundraising, and a handful are thinking about business and writing. A few jokes are tossed around, and the once tense atmosphere lightens. All fears are tossed out the open windows (located in the back of the room). We separate into groups and do our thing. We meet some new people, and the one thing that ties us together helps to bring us closer. I can't explain the feeling of being in the robotics room enough to do it justice, but it's comfortable - a safe haven. A place to be yourself. It's home. And suddenly, everyone feels like family. I can tell already - there is no doubt in my mind that we'll end up spending more hours in room 285 together than humanely possible. But it's all good cause we're gonna rock Regionals - Mortorq style!

## MENTOR SPOTLIGHT - Michael Gordon: The Man Behind The Legend

By: Lisa Bahadori



As the legendary Michael Gordon walks into the room, the Beverly Hills High School Robotics team starts to quiet down. It is obvious that Mike (as he likes to be called) is a respected leader in this mini-community. A man who takes his job very seriously, he exudes confidence and experience, helping Team 1515 with any and all problems.

He was not always a master of engineering and architecture. As a young boy, he loved problem solving and working with his hands, making dollhouses and rocking horses for his family during Christmas. He cites his father, a carpenter, as his inspiration to get started in his high school job of landscaping. Mike pursued his love of building throughout school until he graduated from Penn State University with a degree in architectural engineering.

Through a stroke of luck, a friend of his in Florida got him a position as a faculty design manager in the creative department with Universal. There he tackled colossal projects such as the Twister attraction, a fifty-foot tall tornado show that is simulated indoors with an audience a few feet away. During his five years of work with Universal, he transferred from Florida to California and studied animation at UCLA. While in Los Angeles for a project, he also met his wife, a concept artist who has directed huge projects abroad.

With time, Mike began working as a Walt Disney Imagineer, using his specialization in engineering to participate in over twenty different projects. Most BHHS students have been on a ride that Mike helped build, such as his first Disney

attraction, Tower of Tara, as well as the Finding Nemo attraction. His mentor, Frank Weigand, helped guide Mike through his career at Disney, and the two remain good friends. Mike also mentions Bill Wilcox, Mark Summer, Dave McCartney, and Maureen Hart as individuals who provided him with guidance and inspiration. After seven years with the Disney Imagineering team, Mike left to start his career as an independent contractor, showcasing his skills in projects involving sculpting, architecture, and engineering.

His unique background has brought Mike Gordon to the Beverly Hills High School Robotics team, where he guides the animation and engineering groups each year. He inspires newcomers and offers his unwavering help to his protégés. He also serves as a judge at the California Regionals, a position he has been honored with for the past five years. Although he never judges Team 1515 at competitions for objectivity's sake, he does announce that BHHS is one of the best teams out there, improving each year.

As he begins his speech to the 2009-2010 Robotics team at Beverly, Mike stops to give the room a huge smile. His passion and dedication shine through his calm, strong demeanor, and fill each Robotics member with inspiration. It is because of his guidance and support that his next words ring true: "You guys are all champions, even before you get to the competition". It is due to people like Mike that Team 1515 continues to improve each year, preparing for the upcoming competition with vigor and enthusiasm. When the BHHS Team wins this year at Regionals, we all know that Mike will be cheering the loudest, proud of his team, and ready to be our unwavering support for the upcoming years.

## We Are Family!



By: Anna Khananashvili

The Robotics program, started by Eileen Kahn, has existed for six years at BHHS. Originally a small group of students, the robotics team has grown to be a family, both in the figurative and literal sense. Figuratively speaking, the team is an incredibly tight-knit group of students and mentors. While familiarity may

usually breed contempt, this is certainly not the case with the members of the Robotics team—they spend hours, days, and weeks on end in each other's company, working together towards a common goal, growing closer in the face of obstacles rather than taking the well-trodden path of bickering amongst themselves.

On the other hand, MorTorq has, over the years, become a literal family as well—like a legacy being passed down from sibling to sibling, membership of the Robotics team has become traditional in some families. The Dhillons, Kahns, Kerns, Martins, Phillips, Strombergs, and Zhangs are examples of this—siblings of each family have been and are members of the Robotics team.

Not only do many siblings join Robotics, but the parents of students on the Robotics team also never hesitate to show their support for the team. From tirelessly driving their children to and from meetings to supplying the team with munchies (keep in mind the infamous teenage appetite), parents are a vital part of the Robotics family as well.

## Alumni Take "FIRST" Steps



By: Rebecca Stromberg

As the new school year begins, Robotics can already feel the absence of last year's seniors deep in its bones. The new undergraduate freshmen are currently embarking on an exciting, life-changing period in their lives: college. However, far from forgetting their roots, BHHS Robotics alumni all over the United States are flourishing at their respective colleges and universities; although they miss their "FIRST" home at BHHS, many are giving back to their local robotics communities.

Angel Say, former co-president of MorTorq and current student at Columbia University, plans to major in mechanical engineering. In a salute to his past, he is mentoring a FIRST team on the east coast. Nearby, Bentley Shuster, former head photographer and current student at Boston University, is involved with the BU Rocket Engineering Club and is also preparing for a photojournalism class. She sends her best to the team.

Without a doubt, MorTorq has positively affected the college experience of our alumni. Adam Phillips, a previous business captain, attributes his time management, business, and networking skills to his experience with MorTorq.

1/19/2011

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Phillips, attending the University of Southern California, keeps himself busy with a variety of extracurricular activities, including the production of two TV shows on Trojan Vision, USC's equivalent to KBEV. William Zhang, attending Yale University, describes MorTorq as a "phenomenal experience" that provides endless opportunities for its members; for example, Zhang credits BHHS Robotics with the publication of his first article in a public newspaper.

With an invaluable, irreplaceable Robotics experience backing them up and with the MorTorq entire family cheering them on, our graduated seniors are at last taking their first steps into a new world. We wish them the best of luck!

### 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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