

Roomba Robots rock at Fair; TPHS wins first prize

By Vic Wintriss

With 13 robots lined up side-by-side ready to blast off, with teams from as far away as Alaska, tension fills the air. First prize goes to the team that gets to the finish line ahead of all the others avoiding a field of obstacles along the way. This is the “gold rush challenge” at the first annual International Autonomous Robot Competition (iARoC) held as part of the Kid’s Best at the Del Mar Fair on June 21 and 22. Sponsored by Wintriss Technical Schools, a local nonprofit institution dedicated to changing kids lives by teaching them the Java programming language, the competition featured an Urban Challenge that required the robots to find their way through a maze without any human guidance, and the Gold Rush Challenge free-for-all. Mathew Alexander, 13, team leader for team Kaos screamed as his team’s Lego robot got upset by a stronger Roomba Create robot. Intentionally damaging a competitor’s robot is forbidden by contest rules. In this case it was accidental, and the Lego robot was righted and valiantly struggled forward against a field of much larger machines. Persistence paid off, and team Kaos, the only Junior team, won their division and the \$1,000 first prize along with two Wowee robots. “Cool”, said Ryder Sherwood, another member of team Kaos as he received a Wowee RS Media walking robot for his team. Other team Kaos members were Colin Mitchell, Gavin Kleege, Jordan Alexander, Neil Alexander (mentor), Nevis Kleege (mentor) and team mentor Mike Mitchell who proudly accepted the engraved Junior Division first place trophy with his team.

Final scores to establish team standings were computed from the total points earned from a technical presentation, best time run in the Urban Challenge and finish position in the Gold Rush Challenge. Torrey Pines High School came in first in the Senior Division with 900 total points out of 1,000 possible, winning \$1,000 and two Wowee robots. Mark Vismonte, team leader for the Torrey Pines team was clearly proud of his team’s accomplishment, besting experienced teams from the bay area and even the professional demonstration teams that entered the competition to demonstrate their programming prowess with no possibility of winning any cash prizes. Other members of the Torrey Pines High School Team were Ling Yeung, Prithvi Undavalli, Joel Jauregui and William Wood. Team mentors were Carmen Foltz and Rafael Send.

Several adult demonstration teams entered the competition to demonstrate to the student teams what can be done by professionals. Team Rumba de Roomba: Llewellyn Falco and Jason Kerney; Team Spot On: Clark Scheff and Zebulon Evans, Team Cougar from CSU San Marcos: Dr. David Schaafsma Chris Kemper and Jon Kemper; Sun Microsystems Laboratory team: Lachlan Gregor, John Harris, Arshan Poursohi, Stephen Giandomenico.

Thanks to the generosity of Wintriss Technical Schools board member, attorney Randy Moore and a stipend from the school, Soldotna High School was able to travel from Alaska and participate as part of their first visit to San Diego. Team Alaska members were team leader Will McDermid, Alex Kauffman, Aaron Gordon and team mentor Doug Gordon.

Second place team SD Squirrel from Carmel Valley, led by Matt Allen, scored 700 points out of a possible 1,000. Squirrel team’s mentor is Stanley Kurdziel who is a programmer for Leap Wireless. Other members are Ryan Kemper and Sean Kemper.s They received a check for \$500 and two Wowee robots.

Third place went to team Gunn CS, from Gunn High School in Palo Alto. Team leader Elliot Kroo led team members Kevin Yang, Anand Gupta, Morris Alper, Jeanne Wang, Josh Pailey(mentor) and Lisa Fawcett to a third place finish with 600 points out of a possible 1,000. Cathering Zhang was the team mentor, and accepted a check for \$250 and two Wowee robots along with her team.

Other teams competing were: Westview High School, Vinay Bili-giri, Henry Bradlow, Danny Baldo, Brian Duffy, Davis Burton, William Ho, and Stephan DiPadova, Tammy Neuhaus (team mentor); Poway High School, Kyle Zampell, Steve Stark (mentor), Alex Swaisgood, Alan Burley, Chris Holiday, Nick Stark, Burt Burley, Rodger Dohm (team mentor); Lynbrook High School Funky Monkeys (San Jose), David Liu, Aashish Sreedharan, Daiwei Li, Michael Wachenschwanz, Johnathan Chai, Chinmay Jaju, Toshitaka Tachiban, Matt Hong, David Giandomenico (team mentor), Jaya Sreedharan (team mentor); Monta Vista High School (Cupertino), Aravindh Dorai, Jean Feng, Prashanth Vijay, Sriram Cherukupalli, Greg Klein, Alex Martin, Andy Feng (team mentor).

Judges were Paul Webber (Chief Judge), Ogun Tigli, Gus Wirth, Woody Zuill and Kent Deines.

Sponsors were Sun Microsystems, Dixieline Lumber, Wowee Robots, Outsource Manufacturing, Vision Design, Johnston Creative Solutions, Fedex Kinkos and the San Diego Java Users Group.



(Bottom right) The winning Torrey Pines High School robot team: Adults: (l-r) Vic Wintriss, Eric Arseneau; Students: (l to r) Mark Vismonte, William Wood, Joel Jauregui, Prithvi Undavalli, Ling Yeung.



The Gold Rush challenge.



(Above) Team Squirrel (l-r) Vic Wintriss, Matt Allen, Stanley Kurdziel (mentor), Ryan Kemper.



The youngest team — team KAOS (l-r): Vic Wintriss (giving check), Mathew Alexander, Ryder Sherwood, Colin Mitchell, Gavin Kleege, Jordan Alexander (not all pictured).