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EDUHSD robotics team to St. Louis

By Press Release

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The El Dorado Union High School District Robotics Team is headed to the nation's Championships in St. Louis, Mo., April 25-28, where there will be close to 400 teams from throughout the nation and other countries competing with their robots at the Edward Jones Dome.

This will be the first time the 3-year-old team named Circuit Breakers No. 3189 has qualified to compete in the championships. It was quite a surprise to the team that they made it.

"For a long time we've been having a lot of fun building a robot every year, but we hadn't really been a competitive team," said Shenandoah junior Avery Hughes. "But this year, that has really changed and a lot of the team members are understanding the mentality and the attitude that one has to have to compete at that level."

The team's positive attitude made all the difference at the Sacramento Regional First Robotics Competition held at UC Davis March 15-17. After its robot, named "Andromeda" needed alterations to pass inspections, parts were bent and even exploded during competition. Andromeda missed a few matches while repairs were being made, and at the end of the seeding matches, the Circuit Breakers were ranked 36 out of 50. The team figured it was going home.

What Andromeda had left to offer were three important features: One, the distinction of being the only robot at the competition that was successfully programmed to be operated for a portion of the match by Microsoft's Kinect technology. Kinect reads human body movement and transmits that into robot movement.

Two, she was a defensive bot, designed to get quickly to her opponent's goal, collect and shoot balls away from it and to block their shots. Her shooter was impaired, but her blocking skills were honed.

Three, she was low to the ground and could balance on the tilting bridge, which earned huge bonus points at the end of each match.

With the qualification rounds over, the top eight teams stood on the court to choose two

other teams to join their alliances, forming new teams of three robots each for the final rounds. The top eight took turns choosing until eight alliances had been formed for a total of 24 robots headed for final rounds.

After much anticipation, two of the top teams told the announcer they would “like to invite Team No. 3189 to join our alliance.”

The team made it to the quarterfinals, the farthest it had ever made it in a competition. Its new collaborative alliance, including "Citrus Circuits" from Davis and "Spartan Robotics" from Mountain View, advanced through the quarter- and semifinals before reaching the finals. Using strategy and working together, the alliance won the First Robotics Sacramento Regional, earning a spot in St. Louis.

“It is truly an amazing opportunity for Circuit Breaker students,” said Team coordinator Charlotte Lindborg.

Due to district budget constraints, the team receives no funding and financially supports itself through team dues, fundraising and sponsorships. Since the surprising win at UC Davis in March, the team has raised over \$17,000 toward sending its robot and team to St. Louis. Approximately \$25,000 more is needed and the team is actively seeking donations. If \$25,000 cannot be raised in time, the team will still send a skeleton crew of core students and mentors to compete in the tournament on behalf of the team, since this is such an important opportunity.

The Circuit Breakers appreciate all donations, large and small. Donations can be made by check, payable to “EDUHSD Robotics,” mailed to EDUHSD Robotics Team, Shenandoah Virtual Academy, 6540 Koki Lane, El Dorado 95623. Donations can also be made online at the district Website: eduhsd.net/PaySchools.htm.

The team consisted of junior Isaac Lozano, sophomore Aron Linker, freshmen Clarisse Carlson and Michael Curtis of El Dorado High School; senior Skye Jerpbak, juniors Christopher Rutten and Sam Joseph, sophomore Justin Patridge and freshman Terra Jerpback of Ponderosa High School; seniors Magnus Bergman, Sahil Patel and Josh Hopkins, juniors Karolina Bergman, Brian Haug, Trystan Velasco and Simon Kim, sophomore Sam Sedgwick and freshman Ian Eusebio of Oak Ridge High School; seniors Michael Combrink and Devlyn Nelson, juniors Carole Hewitt, Avery Hughes and Kaitlyn Amos of Shenandoah Virtual Academy; seniors Torgeir Lindborg and James Womack, junior Sean Leapley, and freshmen Peter Banos, Autumn Howe, Vincent Wise and Shawn Ulrey of Union Mine High School.