

# GN South robotics team an 'inspiration'

Local students qualify for championship round of competition after falling short in LI round



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Great Neck South High School students take part in a robotics competition last Saturday.

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Steve Smirti

Great Neck South High School's team advanced to the quarterfinals of the Long Island Regional FIRST Robotics Competition at Hofstra University on Saturday before seeing their dream of winning the tournament end.

But the Great Neck South School team gained a second life when they won the Engineering Inspiration Award, which qualifies them to participate in the championships April 25 to 28 in St. Louis, MO.

"I'm really happy for the kids," said team advisor John Motchkavitz. "They're so creative and they worked very hard." The award comes with a \$5,000 grant, which covers the entrance fee for the competition in St. Louis. "The whole aspect of this [competition] is to promote team work and working together."

The team was acknowledged for "outstanding success in advancing respect and appreciation for engineering and engineers, both within their school, as well as their community."

Fifty schools from Long Island, New York City, Westchester, Pennsylvania, and Ohio participated in the tournament to earn a spot at the FIRST Robotics Competition. FIRST stands for For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.

Each team had six weeks to build and program a robot to compete in the "Rebound Rumble" challenge. The goal of the challenge is to score as many points as possible by putting the ball in three staggered height hoops.

In addition to points, teams are also judged on a variety of other categories such as design efficiency and safety fundamentals.

"This is a very exciting day," said First Robotics Competition director Ginny Greco. "It's an opportunity for these kids to be creative and work as a team."

The skills the students learn at FRC will follow them throughout their lives, she said.

The Great Neck South team is comprised of 55 students.

After receiving the materials and the challenge details in January, the students had six weeks to assemble their robot, which they named "The Rebellion" after the school's mascot, the Rebels.

There are three robotics classes during the school day and an after school program for the kids to work on the robot and to learn more about engineering and technology.

There are many different jobs for each student on the team, Motchavitz said.

"Some kids are great at building, others really like programming or designing," he said. "Everybody has different roles on the team, there's a spot for everybody which is great."

"I love the hands on part of it," said team captain Josh Graber. "My favorite part of building is having to think about the design and figure out where to place certain things."

Graber will graduate in June and has been guaranteed acceptance to Cornell University.

Though the FRC is a competition it also is an outlet for many kids who may not have found a passion for more mainstream activities, Motchavitz said.

"Robotics is a great thing, engineering is a great thing, getting kids involved in these types of hands on activities and showing them that the world is full of great ideas and it evolves from kids is special."