

OKC Robotics Team Shows-off Robots at Choctaw Library

Members of the OKC Homeschool 4H Robotics Team demonstrated two of their robots for children and parents at the Choctaw Library, Wednesday, January 25, 2012, as part of the Lego Robotics workshop being presented by Kyle Worthington, Oklahoma County 4H Educator.

Students were mesmerized as the robots zipped around, grabbed items, and extended robotic arms driven by team members, Bryce Gifford and Jackson Ball. One of the robots was quite large and obviously powerful while the second one was smaller and very quick. Team members, Coley Jameson, Scotland Boyes, and Kermit Alexander, explained why the two robots are so different and demonstrated the capabilities of each. "We compete in two very different competitions. Each competition has different challenges, rules and building materials that are allowed to be used. In the fall, we do OK BEST (Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology) Robotics Competition, and in the spring, we do *FIRST*[®] (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition. We also compete under different team names in each competition," explained Coley Jameson. "Our robot team is actually 'one' team with two names. We are the *FIRST* Robotics 4H Team 2395: Ninja Munkees when we compete in *FIRST*, and we are known as the OKC Homeschool Robotics Team when we compete for OK BEST," stated Larry McWilliams, Head Coach for the *FIRST* Ninja Munkees.

Both robotics competitions allow only six weeks for the teams to design, prototype, and test their robots. With the help of professional mentors/engineers, these students learn to work under real-world conditions that force them to improvise, innovate, work within a budget, and find new ways to simply "get creative" at solving problems.

But, these kids are about more than just robots and winning. Larry McWilliams told the audience, "The team practices *gracious professionalism*." A term coined by *FIRST* which means being fiercely competitive while respecting and showing kindness to competitors. It is commonplace to see students working on another team's robot, sharing parts, or offering advice and suggestions. "It's a great group of kids. They want to inspire others to develop interests in science and technology by sharing their enthusiasm for competitive robotics. The team is always happy to schedule demonstrations and/or presentations," said Larry McWilliams.

The Oklahoma Regional - *FIRST* Robotics Competition will be held March 29-31, 2012, at the Cox Convention Center in downtown OKC. The excitement and intensity of the competitions have been compared to that of sporting events. Larry McWilliams said, "Everyone is welcome to come and cheer the team on. We'd love to have you."

If you would like to learn more about the team, becoming a member, the competitions and our wonderful sponsors, please visit: www.okcrobot.com. If you want to learn more about becoming a sponsor, please email the team at okcrobot@gmail.com, attention "Kristi Gifford."