



Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois robotics teams qualify for FIRST LEGO League State Tournament

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GLEN CARBON - Three Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois (GSSI) robotics teams have qualified for the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Illinois State Tournament being held Jan. 28 at University of Illinois in Champaign: GIR! from Staunton, Purple Robot Penguins from O'Fallon and SWAT from Troy. FLL is a robotics program for 9 to 14 year olds which is designed to get children excited about science and technology, as well as teach them valuable life skills. Along with programming robots, teams are also evaluated on an elaborate research project, as well as how well they demonstrate FLL Core Values, which include teamwork, collective learning, active participation and gracious professionalism. After practicing and preparing for months, teams meet at regional qualifying tournaments to be graded on the three elements, with top teams advancing to state competition.

GIR! and SWAT qualified for the state tournament during the regional tournament held Dec. 3 at Henning Elementary School in Troy. In addition, SWAT won Top Table

Performance Award and GIR! won the Champion's Award for their overall top performance. Purple Robot Penguins qualified for the state tournament during the regional tournament held Dec. 10 at Carriel Jr. High in O'Fallon. The team also won the Champions Award.

“We're very excited to have three Girl Scout robotics teams qualify for the state tournament,” said GSSI STEM Program Manager Mary Buchanan. “We're proud of all of our GSSI teams and their volunteer coaches. Competing on a robotics team takes a lot of dedication and hard work, along with the technical and teamwork skills that girls develop throughout the season.”

This year, 12 GSSI teams from Albers, Alton, Anna, Belleville, Chester, Mt. Olive, O'Fallon (4), Staunton and Troy participated in FLL robotics. GSSI's metro-east robotics teams are sponsored by The Monsanto Fund, the philanthropic arm of the Monsanto Company, which awarded GSSI a \$25,000 grant to support GSSI's STEM initiatives in Jersey, Macoupin, Madison and St. Clair Counties. This grant is part of a broad commitment by the Monsanto Fund focused on strengthening the Greater St. Louis community, where Monsanto Fund and Monsanto Company are headquartered.

Robotics are a vital part of GSSI's science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programming, which continues to be a progressive and forward-thinking initiative that has grown exponentially in recent years. GSSI has dedicated staff and volunteers who develop the STEM program through research, collaborator cultivation, training and hands-on experience. GSSI strives to offer diverse and high-quality STEM programming, such as simple circuit wiring, programming robots, exploring forensics and more. To ensure that even more girls have the chance to take advantage of these future-building opportunities, GSSI has integrated STEM activities into its outreach programs – which bring Girl Scouting to girls in underserved populations, such as low income neighborhoods, housing projects, rural communities and even detention centers.

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois is a high-capacity Girl Scout council serving approximately 13,000 girls and almost 4,500 adult volunteers in 40 ½ counties in southern Illinois. Girl Scouting has inspired more than 50 million girls and women since its founding in 1912. Today, Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. is the largest voluntary organization for girls in the world. Its sole focus is to meet the needs of all girls (ages 5-17) from diverse racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Today's Girl Scouts not only enjoy camping and crafts, but they also explore math and science and learn about diversity, good citizenship, leadership and teamwork. Girl Scouting is the place where girls experience the fun, friendship and power of girls together.

About Monsanto Fund

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