

Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois robotics team wins Motivate Award, qualifies for FIRST Tech Challenge state tournament

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GLEN CARBON – Girl Scouts of Southern Illinois robotics team, OOPS! Robotics, won the Connect Award and was a finalist for the Motivate Award at the FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) regional qualifying tournament at Decatur Hope Academy on Feb. 11. The team also advanced to the FTC Illinois State tournament, which will be held Feb. 24-25 at Elgin Community College in Elgin.

FTC is designed for students in grades 7-12 to compete head to head, in an alliance format against other teams. Teams design, build and program their robot using a variety of programming languages and sound engineering principles, then plan strategies for competition. Awards are given for competitive performance as well as for community outreach, design, and other real-world accomplishments.

The Connect Award is presented to the team that most connects with their local STEM community. To win, a team must submit an engineering notebook with a strategic plan which highlights the team's goals and the steps they will take to reach those goals. The team must also provide clear examples of the connections they have been developing within engineering, science and technology communities.

The Motivate Award is given to the team that best exemplifies the essence of FTC competition through team building, team spirit and enthusiasm. The team must demonstrate respect and gracious professionalism throughout the tournament and be able to articulate the individual contributions of each team member.

In addition to their achievements at the Decatur regional, OOPS! also qualified for the Missouri State Tournament earlier this season. That tournament will be held March 4 at Missouri S&T University in Rolla.

GSSI's Oops! Robotics team is coached by Kristi Smith and Mary Buchanan of O'Fallon and consists of middle and high school girls from Belleville, Granite City and O'Fallon. Team members are Katherine Buchanan, Mary Buchanan, Mackenzie Butchee, Allie Huller, Kimberly Melton, Chloe Schlosser, Kailee Schlosser, Amber Smith, Leah Walton, Allison Zaiz and Megan Zaiz.

OOPS! Robotics receives funding from Afton Chemical, Christone Enterprises, Best Buy, Boeing, The Monsanto Fund and Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC).

Science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programming is an important component of the Girl Scout Leadership Experience. GSSI provides girls of all age levels with the opportunity to participate in engaging STEM activities that include writing code, wiring circuits, conducting physics and chemistry experiments and more. The organization is always looking for community and business partners to help girls gain exposure to and experience with these growing fields. For more information about GSSI's STEM Program, please contact Program Manager Emily Stanley at 800.345.6858, ext. 1111 or estanley@gssofsi.org.