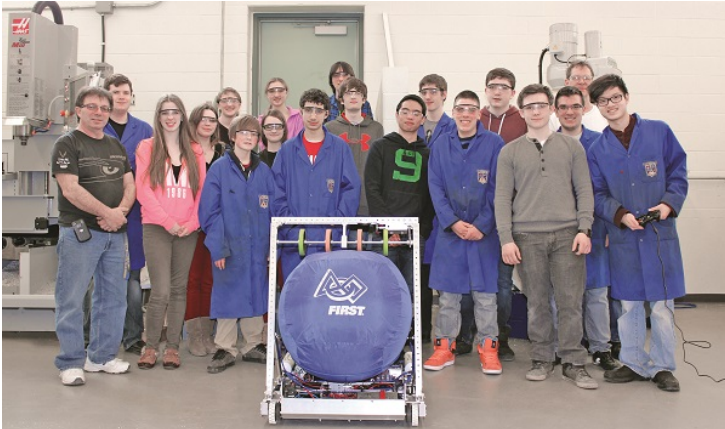


St. Max teens put finishing touches on Robot Max 3.0



By Jeff Doner

Students at St. Maximilian Kolbe CHS have spent the last week working in over drive to finish Max.

The 43 teens have put the finishing touches on Max 3.0, their robot, in time for the upcoming FIRST Robotics Canada Regional Championships at Crescent School in Toronto at the end of this month, followed by another challenge in North Bay next month.

"This is the last hurrah," said transportation teacher and project mentor, Peter Karl. "We have three days to finish building, so as you can see, we still have to manufacture bumpers and get some other things worked out."

This year, the challenge is to build a robot that can get a hold of a large exercise ball, pick it up and then throw it into a series of targets or goals that vary in difficulty to score points.

It's the club's third year at St. Max and Karl said he is amazed by how popular it has become among students.

"The interest is definitely growing and this year our splits of Grade 9s, 10s, 11s and 12s are all equal, which is become even more self-sustaining as [when] the Grade 12s graduate there'll be younger people coming in," he said.

Manufacturing teacher and club mentor, Lorenzo Conte, said he's not really surprised with how many students are getting involved with the club, as there is something for everyone.

The club, which has no school credit, has built something of a mini-corporation with each student have a job and a roll to fulfill. This includes anything from design, manufacturing, programming, finance, business and they even have a marketing and media department that is responsible for their website and promotion.

Grade 12 student Jessie Atemanchuk is the past-chief and has noticed a steady growth in the club's abilities over the years.

"We're definitely doing better than we have in the past. We've learned a lot and we're moving forward definitely in organization and efficiency especially," he said.

Atemanchuk, who will be graduating this year, has applied to engineering programs and said the club helped him gain confidence in his skills.

"This club has really encouraged me to choose engineering programs, because I wasn't even thinking of them before."

This year Grade 11 student Brian Ho has stepped into the role of head chief and agreed things have gotten better each year.

?Things have definitely been fast this year compared to last year and I guess every year we're just building upon what we have and people are starting to get the hang of it more,? he said. ?We have gone to competition against teams with over 10 years experience and we see how they're organizational skills are different from ours and we learn from them.?

Ho has been a big part of the programming for Max 3.0 and said he's happy with the progress, but knows there are still some long days ahead for the team before they perfect their robot for competition.

If the club can manage to finish in first place at one of the regional competitions, they will be off to the World Championships in St. Louis, Missouri, where in excess of 5,000 teams from all over the world will compete.

However, aside from a little financial support from the School Board, the club is self-sustaining and has to fund most of the project from their own pockets.

The students have been relentlessly campaigning and fundraising to meet their targets, raising roughly \$15,000 thus far. After all the hard work over the past couple months, Ho said there's just one goal in mind.

?Hopefully we win the Worlds in the States and we can show our pride as Canadians in winning this.?

For more information or to help support the club, visit their website at 4343.ca