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Northwestern Regional Robotics Team Gears Up For 3rd Season

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By Megan Llewellyn

Each member of the Northwestern Robotics Gearheads, NRG, started 2013 with one goal in mind: to build a robot capable of shooting Frisbees and climbing pyramids. To accomplish their goal, NRG spent six intense weeks designing, building, wiring, and programming a robot. The result was an eighty pound robot capable of shooting Frisbees at various angles, which was extremely useful during competition. NRG took their robot to the Connecticut Regional, where they placed 28th out of the 56 teams competing. Following Hartford, NRG traveled to Lewiston, Maine to compete in the Pine Tree Regional competition, where they placed 12th out of the 38 teams competing. NRG received the Entrepreneurship Award for their excellent business plan, and team president

Eli Wootton was awarded a Dean’s List award, the highest honor a FIRST Robotics student can receive.

NRG is a FIRST Robotics Team stationed at Northwestern Regional 7 High School in Winsted. FIRST, which stands for For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, is an international organization that encourages children and young adults to pursue careers in science and mathematics.

In 2011, with help from the ALCOA Foundation, NRG 4055 was created. In that first year, the Gearheads competed in Rebound Rumble, which centered on building a robot that could play basketball. The team won the Rookie All-Star award at the Connecticut Regional and competed in the world championships in St. Louis, where they were the highest-seeded rookie team in their division.

Now, the Gearheads are gearing up for their third season. The theme of the 2014 challenge will not be announced until January, but the team is busy preparing, and has been fundraising all summer. Robotics is expensive, costing \$5,000 just to enter a competition. Travel, materials, and events make up the team’s annual budget of \$30,000. This summer, the team has been holding bake sales and tag sales, and sent out a mailing to 187 companies seeking corporate sponsors. Recently, the team was thrilled to learn that its major sponsor, Alcoa, has signed on for three more years, and that Norfolk Connecticut Children’s Foundation will support NRG with a \$2,000 grant.

To see the Gearheads in action, stop by the Bash at the Beach Competition at Old Lyme Middle School on October 5. Bash at the Beach is an offseason competition and is free for all spectators. Or, invite the Gearheads to demonstrate their robot at your company or event. For more information on NRG, visit www.nrg4055.org/, or email NRG4055@gmail.com, and to see information on FIRST robotics, visit www.usfirst.org/.

Megan Llewellyn is a senior at Northwestern Regional High School. She is the NRG officer in charge of public relations.

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