



Big, Little: Full STEAM ahead!

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Parents and kids of all ages visited the library Monday for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) Day to witness demonstrations of the Vermillion Area robotics club's winning robots.

The middle and high school students in the program were involved in two different competitions this year and won both times.

"The first robot is BEST (Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology)," said Stian, grade 9. "We did that competition in the fall. We start in September. Basically they give you a box of materials including the motors or the cortex of the brain of the robot and then you have to make the rest. We did a simple design that picks up the blades that you put into the windmill and we made a pulley system



Members of the Vermillion Area Robotics Club showcased their winning robots to delighted spectators young and old at the library Monday evening giving them the chance to test drive one of them.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

out of the rope."

The design was appreciated by younger spectators at the library event.

"People drive the robots and make towers with pegs," observed Joaquin,

age 9. "There was one part where you could actually drive a robot."

Spectators did have the opportunity to see what it's like to guide one of the robots through an obstacle

course.

"We got special wheels so the robot could go forward, backward and diagonal," Stian said. "They give you the obstacle course and then you build around that. Last year the competition was moving balloons so you had to design a robot that would move those. This year we had to pick up blocks and stack them on the towers."

Stian said his favorite part of the competition was building and running the robots. Stian acted as driver for both competitions.

"It is a career I've been looking into," he said. "They

need people to manage robots and design them. I was looking into engineering before this so the designing and building was something I really enjoyed."

Joaquin also has an interest in building robots.

"I would if I knew how," he said. "I build with Legos, I build with trio blocks, I build with wooden blocks, so a lot of stuff."

According to Stian, you don't need previous know-how to do well with robotics.

This is his first year in the program.

"They did 4H over the summer and had different robotics competitions at the Dakota Dome," Stian said. "This fall when they did the BEST they invited me to come help because they knew I was good with building."

Joaquin himself has made a good start with building and problem-

solving like the kids in the robotics program.

"I used to just make cars and I would push them," he said. "Then I'd see how far they would go."

According to Joaquin, trial and error is the key.

"The one car could go pretty far across the kitchen," he said. "Some other cars when I built them they would just go off to the side. I know that it has to be low. It can be pretty long. The front can't be all big and fat. It has to be thin and that was kind of what they did with the robots."

"They didn't make them really, really big like I sometimes made my cars. They made them kind of like a box."

Joaquin said he does want to be an engineer when he grows up but not the kind that builds robots.

"I want to be a civil engineer because my dad's a civil engineer," he said.

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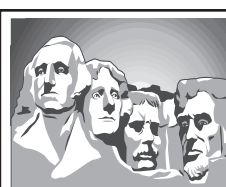
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