

NOTEBOOK

Robotics
win for
LI alliance

An alliance of teams from Great Neck South High School, William Floyd High School in Mastic Beach and Earl L. Vandermeulen High School in Port Jefferson won first place last weekend in the Long Island Regional FIRST Robotics High School Competition at Hofstra University. Forty-seven teams from Long Island, Manhattan and Connecticut schools participated.

Cold Spring Harbor High School won the Rookie All-Star Award and Plainview-Old Bethpage JFK High School won the Regional Chairman's Award. All five teams will advance to the national competition later this month in Atlanta.

"We did poorly the first seven matches, but our drivers got much better with tactics and maneuvering as the competition went on," said Peter Esposito, Vandermeulen's team adviser. "Most of our team is made up of first-year members, so they really stepped up big time."

In the contest, teams design and build a 120-pound robot in six weeks using a standard kit of parts and common rules. This year robots had to pick up balls and deposit as many as possible in their opponent's trailer in two minutes.

Great Neck South's robot contained rollers that picked up balls when passing over them. One day before the matches, however, the team learned its robot was seven pounds overweight. "The scale we used at school was off," senior Valerie Suttenberg, noting that the team drilled large holes in the robot to shed weight at the last minute. "It looked like Swiss cheese when we were done."

Second place was won by an alliance from Plainview-Old Bethpage JFK, Patchogue-Medford and Plainedge.

AMITYVILLE

Donor equips a new computer laboratory

Amityville High School unveiled a new computer lab last month following a donation of 26 computers from John DiLiberto, president of Island Drafting & Technical Institute in Amityville. The computers became available after DiLiberto updated the institute's equipment, district officials said.

"He's been a great friend to us," Superintendent John R. Williams said of DiLiberto. "We get a lot of offers of used computers, but they are never in such excellent condition."

DiLiberto received a citation from the district at a recent Board of Education meeting.



PHOTO BY GINA TOMITZ

Students from Earl L. Vandermeulen High School in Port Jefferson, above, were part of an alliance of teams that won first place in the Long Island robotics competition at Hofstra University. Great Neck South and William Floyd high schools shared the prize.

NOW
ONLINE

Forty-seven teams brought their machines. See photos and a video from the robotics competition at Hofstra.

newsday.com/
education

DEER PARK

Legal issues subject of police officer's forum

More than 1,000 students at Robert Frost Middle School learned about the legal consequences of various actions last month through PoliceSmart, an educational program from the Suffolk County Police Department that brings officers into the classroom. Topics included the dangers of drugs and alcohol, cyberbullying and car safety.

"The world is not as rosy as a lot of kids might think it is," said principal Eliana Levey, noting many students were particularly interested in slow-motion footage of a car crash. "If they didn't wear a seat belt before, they will now."

The lecture was hosted by Deer Park alum and police officer Antoinette Semetsis.

MASTIC BEACH

Leadership roles as state lawmakers

William Floyd High School students took seven of the top 10 leadership positions last month at the YMCA's 73rd Annual Youth & Government Conference at the state's legislative chambers in Albany. The conference introduces teens to the inner workings of state government by having them draft and debate mock legislation, which ranged from a mandatory installation of solar panels to giving voting rights to ex-felons.

William Floyd leaders were Nick Collins, who was chosen for the governor's post, and Robert Brett, James Evans, Kim

Molfetto, Malea Otranto, Kerri Pliego and Amy Popper.

"I'm pinching myself," said principal Robert Feeny, noting William Floyd students have secured the governor's position at six of the last seven conferences. "This event gives me tremendous faith that the future will be in good hands."

Students James Evans, Anthony Hernandez and Malea Otranto also won best debater honors, and Eric Noonan was named best attorney.

MILLER PLACE

Simulator mimics dangers of driving

Miller Place High School students tested their driving skills last month through an auto simulator supplied by Kramer Entertainment, a Michigan-based company that supplies technology-based attractions and games. As the teens tried maneuver a vehicle, the simulator mimicked the effects of drugs and alcohol on the drivers, and how noisy pas-

sengers can affect a driver.

"The auto simulator succeeds in getting the students focused on not crashing a car, and that is exactly the outcome we are looking for," said assistant principal Kurt Roth.

The lesson was reinforced by a display of photos of drunken driving accidents and a talk describing how crashes can permanently affect the driver and family of the victim.

PORT JEFFERSON

Dancing to a beat for heart health lesson

Kindergartners at Edna Louise Spear Elementary School recently learned to calculate their heart rate during a heart health lesson conducted by science teacher Ginny Bove. As part of the program, the group of 100 students danced to the Village People song "YMCA" and then used heart rate monitors to see how exercise elevates their heartbeats per minute.

WAY TO GO!

On the ball to help others

Joelle Dorskind is a varsity soccer player who also knows how to execute a slam dunk.

A Westhampton Beach High School senior, Dorskind coordinated a Special Olympics Basketball Tournament last month that attracted more than 200 student volunteers, spectators and athletes to the high school. The idea initiated from her volunteer efforts the last two summers at Center



Joelle Dorskind

Moriches-based Camp Pa-Qua-Tuck, which serves people with disabilities.

"I had such a great time bonding with campers that I wanted my classmates to experience it, too," said Dorskind, 17. "It's important to see that even though these kids have disabilities, they still have many abilities."

Dorskind called Special Olympics New York two years ago to propose an event and

"This is the best age to teach students how to take care of their heart," said Bove.

COUNTYWIDE
Irvin Awards

Three Suffolk County students were among 31 statewide to win the Ann M. Irvin Youth Award from the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus for their work with local youth bureaus. Winners were Joe DeVito of William Floyd High School in Mastic Beach, Nicole Loder of Westhampton Beach High School and Tariq Sarsars of Patchogue-Medford High School.

ISLANDWIDE

Reflections winners

Eleven Long Island students are among 24 statewide to win awards of excellence in the New York State PTA's Reflections Contest and will compete at the national level this month.

Centereach: Jillian Bratton of Centereach High School dance choreography; **Islip Town:** Brandon Miller of Robert C. Kinney Elementary School visual arts; **Lake Ronkonkoma:** Evan Walters of Samoset Middle School, film production; **Levittown:** Thomas Mervia of MacArthur High School, film production; **Massapequa:** Jamie De Filippis of Massapequa High School, musical composition; **Northport:** Sarah Connor of Ocean Avenue School, film production; **Smithtown:** Lorean Galarza of Branch Brook Elementary School, photography; **Michigan:** Golub of Mt. Pleasant Elementary School, film production; **South Huntington:** Sara Giannini and Kyle Montemurro of Whitman High School, literature and visual arts, respectively; **Syosset:** Danielle Diamante of South Woods Middle School, visual arts.

— MICHAEL R. EBERT

asked her school's student government to help promote it and find local businesses — including Whitney's Deli in Westhampton Beach and Hampton Coffee Company — to supply food and funding.

The tournament consisted of eight 10-person teams, she said, with an arts and crafts area for the Special Olympics athletes during down time.

"Joelle is a tremendous asset to the school community," said principal Christopher Herr.

In addition to being a varsity soccer player, Dorskind is a member of the student government, the National Honor Society, the Multicultural Club and Interact, a community service club.

— MICHAEL R. EBERT