

Rebel robotics tuned in

By **EAMONN MAHER**
Staff Writer

The new kids on the block weren't intimidated in their first big mission together as a group of 26 Georgetown District High School students and their accompanying adult support staff placed fourth out of 67 teams at a recent robotics competition in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

Instead of spending time on the beach or relaxing in the warmer climes, the Rebels were hard at work during the three-day, NASA-sponsored FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics Competition to try to solve an engineering and design problem alongside other high school teams from around the world.

It took six weeks of preparation for the GDHS team to get ready for the 11th-annual event. It's a credited night course through the Gary Allan program for senior students who attended class two nights a week, as well as on Saturdays in the weeks leading up to the Myrtle Beach adventure. Grade 9-10 students were welcome to join but do not receive a credit.

Dale Lynds, a computer engineering

and electrical teacher at GDHS who helped oversee the trip, said all of the painstaking work beforehand paid off with the result thanks in part to the eight volunteer mentors from the local community who provided their time and resources to the venture.

Parents also chipped in by preparing meals for the group for some of the lengthy work sessions at the school and local firms including Mold-Masters, ITK, Flodraulic and Prosperity One provided financial support.

"There were only two rookie teams to make (the finals) and I thought we had the better robot," said Lynds, who had attended the competition last year with Burlington's Nelson entry.

"(The organizers) do give you a day or so before the competition to tinker and tweak the robot, because they know that's what happens in real life industry. Some of our mentors who work globally as engineers said at the end of (the weekend) that they'd have a hard time doing what we did in six weeks."

This weekend, GDHS's team will be in North Bay for a regional competition involving 35 schools. The winner earns an invitation to compete in the world championships in St. Louis April 23-26.



Pictured above are members of the drive team for the large Georgetown District High School robotics contingent that participated in the FIRST Robotics Competition in South Carolina recently. From left are: Marc Levesque, mentor Craig Chambers, Simon Ardron, Matt Hopson, Michael Robotin. The Rebels' robotic squad will be in North Bay this weekend for another big competition. Submitted photo

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