

COMMUNITY

Holy Cross student attending robotics tournament this month

Burgeoning engineers from Mississauga's after-school program Zebra Robotics may be living proof that learning can be fun.

Two teams, aged 9-13, took in some valuable coding and programming skills while playing with Lego building blocks at recent competitions.

After winning regional First Lego League tournaments at Rick Hansen and Fletcher's Meadows secondary schools late last month, the Robo Recons and Robo Raptors have moved on to a provincial competition in January at the University of Waterloo.

The Raptors team includes 12-year-old Dustin Leitzke, who attends Grade 7 at Holy Cross School in Georgetown. Dustin has also been attending robotics classes on Saturdays at Zebra Robotics for almost two years; eight of the 10 kids on his team have been working together since March 2014.

Zebra founder Satish Thiyagarajan explained that the Lego showdowns are held in partnership with companies such as 3M and Rockwell Automation (locally) and take place across the globe, totalling about 20,000 participants.

Some 35 teams were at the recent regional events held at Rick Hansen and Fletcher's Meadows.

The competition was broken down into three parts, and youngsters were given two and a half minutes to complete challenges with their Lego robot.

"The robot has to work independently without using the remote control to complete the challenges," said Thiyagarajan, who has a background in engineering himself.

He added that participants are also judged on presentation and teamwork.



Holy Cross Grade 7 student Dustin Leitzke is part of Robo Raptors, a robotics team that has qualified for a provincial competition at the University of Waterloo in January.

Submitted Photo

"They are doing things that what could set them up to get into a robotics engineering program or mechanical engineering," he said of the takeaways.

The two Peel squads will be among 40 to 50 teams competing in the First Lego League provincials next month.

Visit zebrarobotics.com to learn more about the after-school program.

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