

4-H Revolutionizes Youth Robotics

(NAPSA)—With just two minutes until their next match, members of 4-H's AIR Strike 78 robotics team worked feverishly to repair a broken chain on their robot when the opponent called a time-out. They were relieved; they now had 10 more minutes to get the chain and motor back in place before their next match.

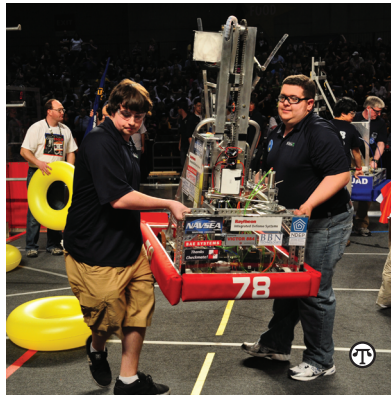
AIR Strike 78 is one of 60 4-H robotics teams across the country participating in FIRST Robotics, a competitive robotics organization for middle and high school youth. Teams have six weeks to design and build a robot to compete in a game that will challenge both their engineering and sport skills.

4-H's growing robotics program has inspired youth to take an active interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics over the last few years. With the newly released 4-H Robotics Curriculum, youth of all ages are now engaged in robotics and engineering concepts early on, which sparks an interest in pursuing science careers and higher learning.

"The great achievements of our youth in robotics are proof positive of what we've learned from the longitudinal study conducted by Tufts University: Young people in 4-H perform better in science, engineering, technology and applied math subjects, and are more interested in pursuing science careers than their non-4-H peers," said Donald T. Floyd Jr., National 4-H Council president and CEO.

In addition to FIRST, 4-H'ers also participate in robotics competitions such as the MATE (Marine Advanced Technology Education) International ROV competition, where youth build robots that tackle real-world issues, like repairing oil spills completely underwater.

"Youth in 4-H have really jumped into robotics; 12 of our 60 4-H teams were invited to compete at the national level this year, and we expect those numbers to continue



4-H AIR Strike 78 is one of more than 60 competitive 4-H Robotics teams.

to grow," said Floyd. "Through their experiences in 4-H, our young people are on the path to become the nation's next generation of great scientists and engineers."

The rising interest in robotics within the 110-year-old organization is representative of 4-H's progression and ability to remain relevant in the lives of today's American youth. While 4-H has been known historically for its agricultural and healthy living activities through after-school clubs across the country, it has evolved to include a more diversified science program that allows youth to explore interests in a variety of programs, from animal and environmental science to rocketry and renewable energies.

As AIR Strike 78 and other 4-H Robotics teams wrapped up their pit stops between matches at the national FIRST Robotics Championship, they knew that it's not always about winning and losing.

"This is an amazing amount of knowledge here," said a member of the Camdenton (Mo.) 4-H Laser robotics team. "Just the hands-on experience, I mean; you can never get this in a classroom. It's an experience like no other."

For more information on 4-H Robotics and the new 4-H Robotics Curriculum, visit www.4-H.org.