

The Drill

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FIRST Lego League!



The Fembots at FLL Kickoff

By Alex Bittle

On Friday, September 2, Maxine, Meagan, and I went to the FLL Kickoff at Intel in Folsom.

We packed B2, our 2009 robot, into the back of my pickup truck after many failed attempts to use our team trailer and set off for Intel. Once there, we cleared an area for the robot. The veterans on the team taught the rookies how to drive and operate B2. While the rookies drove B2, the other girls talked to the many parents and students who approached us, asking about our team and our robots. Then it was time to watch the FLL

presentation for the new game challenge of the year: Food Factor.

This year's game is all about the safe preservation of food and the journey from the producers to the consumers. After the presentation, we went back to demonstrating our robot and talking to people. We were even able to persuade some interested adults to start their own FLL teams as well as sign up some current FLL teams for the Fembots to mentor.

Sponsor the Fembots!

By Jordin Fong

While keeping strong bonds with our current sponsors, we are **ALWAYS** looking for more support! If you are interested in sponsoring us please email Mrs. Gaines at kgaines@stfrancishs.org

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Spreading the Word of FIRST

by Jane Nazareno '12

During the entire month of September, the Fembots visited middle schools in the Sacramento area to spread the word of FIRST. The Fembots visited St. Patrick, St. Mary, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Schools. Olivia, Alex, Maxine, Jaz, and Laura attended the Principals' Luncheon where they met principals from all the parochial schools.

I was fortunate enough to present at St. Patrick School and St. Mary School. At St. Patrick School, Alex, Shelly, and I spoke to 5th through 8th graders about what FIRST was and what we did as an all-girls robotics team. We told the students about FIRST Lego League and how much fun it is. Also, we brought along our 2009 robot, B2, and demonstrated it in front of the students. They were amazed that we built B2 in just six weeks. The students enjoyed watching B2 gather the balls and spit them right out. I loved interacting with the students. I hope they get inspired to be involved in the fields of science and technology! Later that day, Jaz, Maxine, and I visited St. Mary School to speak to the parents during their Back-to-School Night. Numerous parents seemed very interested in the FIRST Lego League program. I was glad to have spread the message of FIRST out to other people in my community.



Wargo Hall

Meagan Durante '12

Once there was a storage unit named Wargo Hall with shelving and electricity lovingly built in for us by Ed Wargo, one of our maintenance staff, on his own time. We had the best “bin” in the city! However, after two years of neglect it had lost all hope of ever being clean again, until on the morning of Sunday, September 11, 2011 when nine Fembots and many parents came prepared to tackle the disarray that lived within Wargo Hall.

The students were determined to go through all their inventory and attempt to make it smaller. After the deliberation over what items should be kept and what items should be thrown out was settled—

the students and parents started to bring the kept items back into Wargo Hall. The workers were directed to the new locations of the items and each item’s location was recorded to make finding the items later much easier. By the end of the day, around 3pm, Wargo Hall had been emptied, swept, and reorganized and the volunteers and Fembots, satisfied with their work, left the campus of St. Francis High School with smiles on their faces.

Upcoming Events:

Visit SFHS on December 4 from 10:00-2:30 to see a FIRST Lego League Tournament in action! Guests are welcome.

E-Waste

By Chelsea Franklin

On Saturday, October 1, FIRST Team 692 and CEAR, INC sponsored a Free E-Waste Collection at St. Francis High School. Sacramento residents brought electronic waste, such as TV's, computer monitors, cell phones, VCRs, DVD players, microwaves, stereo equipment, coffee makers, clothing irons, and telephones. While parents collected E-waste, the Fembots gave complimentary car washes.

I arrived at school early

in the morning, and there were only two other Fembots there because the others hadn't arrived yet. I started out “sign-dancing” with Ty, a veteran on the team. After that, I was assigned to estimate the weights of the E-Waste material being dropped off, but since a veteran knew how to do the estimating more accurately, I moved to the car wash.

Washing Cars was a blast! We were spraying each other with the water hoses and



playing “sponge football” in between cars. We washed a ton of cars, and, from what I could see, we collected a lot of E-Waste. I really enjoyed the experience, and it looked like we earned enough money to send 2 of our 27 girls to championships in St. Louis—which is our goal for this year.



Information coming soon regarding a Junior FLL Team Expo at SFHS in the Spring.

~Our Alumna: Michelle Grau '09~

To say that being on Team 692 changed my life is an understatement. I came in as a very quiet, scared freshman, thinking all I wanted to do was learn how to build a robot. And I did do that as a member of the Fembots, which is in fact why I am now a mechanical engineering major in college. But there is so much more to being a Fembot than building a robot. The friends I made on the team are still some of my closest friends. I learned leadership, organization, and people management as co-captain of the team for two years, skills that I use now as an officer in two clubs in college and that I used last summer in my job as a physics camp counselor (I was selected for the position, I might add, because I had my FLL mentoring experience on my resume, including the names of the schools we mentored, one of which was Sam Brannan Middle School. The director of the camp who interviewed me was from Sacramento and attended Sam Brannan as a kid. We hit it off right away, and I had my acceptance email in my inbox by the time I got home that day!). As a Fembot, I learned public speaking after giving presentations to sponsors and appearing on TV several times. My experience on the Fembots was instrumental in my receiving a robotics internship at NASA Ames for two summers. I love FIRST, and make it a point to give back by volunteering at competitions, both FRC and FLL. I have formed instant friendships when students from other FIRST teams have noticed I was wearing a FIRST t-shirt or all the buttons on my backpack.



Perhaps the biggest way Team 692 has impacted my college life is through FLL. At the beginning of my senior year at St. Francis (2008-2009), the team began a project to start more FLL middle school teams in the Sacramento area. Every week that fall, I took Fembots to two different schools and we mentored the teams. I had a blast as I discovered my love for working with the young students and supporting the adult coaches. I realized that along with everything else I would miss from being on Team 692, I would really miss mentoring FLL teams when I went away to college. But when I got to campus, among the myriad of clubs, I discovered a tiny one, started by another FIRST alum, dedicated to teaching middle school students robotics with the intent of starting and mentoring FLL teams. I instantly felt like I was at home. We worked with two middle schools through an after-school program for disadvantaged students, and last year, managed to have two FLL teams. The kids had a fantastic time, and so did I, especially since I knew that we were truly giving these kids an opportunity to learn something they would otherwise never even dream existed.

The club president and other senior members who founded the club graduated, and I am now president of this club. This past summer, I met a professor in our graduate mechanical engineering department whose wife works with some underperforming schools to improve their science curriculum. Together, they were trying to find ways to introduce robotics to the middle schools. They did not know FLL existed, and they were excited after I spent three hours telling them about it! Together, we started two new teams that my club will be mentoring. However, this may also be turning into an independent research project for me, as we are investigating how a student's participation in FLL changes their perceptions of science and engineering. I'm also working with the directors of Northern California Jr.FLL/FLL/FTC to hopefully expand what my club is doing. For example, I want to host a Jr.FLL Expo.

As for the rest of my life, I do wushu (it's a Chinese martial art form) and gymnastics. I'm continuing my summer research work, which is in the field of engineering education. I haven't lost my love of making life hard on myself, taking "fun" classes like organic chemistry. But FIRST is still a giant part of my life. The experiences I had and skills I learned on our team have opened up all kinds of interesting doors, and I can't imagine my life without it.