



Good Spirit School Division No. 204

63 King Street East

Yorkton, SK S3N 0T7

Phn 306.786.5500 ~ Toll Free 866.390.0773 ~ Fax 306.783.0355

Website: www.gssd.ca or E-mail: feedback@mail.gssd.ca

~ MEDIA RELEASE ~

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YRHS ROBOTICS TEAM WINS NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL ... AGAIN!

The Board of Education of the Good Spirit School Division is very proud to recognize the achievements of the Yorkton Regional High School (YRHS) Robotics team. On May 28 and 29, they participated in and were awarded the top ranking in the Skills Canada National Competition (SCNC) in Saskatoon, SK. Team members include Brock Chiasson, Sean Furber, Brett Guenther and James Theissen (all Grade 10 students) as well as coach Mr. Kevin Chiasson, YRHS Practical and Applied Arts teacher.

“This is the fourth year in a row that one of our Robotics teams has medalled in national competition with 3 gold medals in 2012, 2013 and 2015 and 1 bronze in 2014,” states Kevin Chiasson. He goes on to say, “The Robotics Club at the school is truly led by the students where fresh, new ideas are generated every year that come from their own unique backgrounds and experiences.”

Starting at the beginning of the school year, students in robotics classes interested in robotics as an extra-curricular activity at YRHS meet every Wednesday after school. The skills competition event is revealed to all schools in September. Students use their meetings to brainstorm, build, troubleshoot and practice to find the best robot model to collect the most points to win.

Mr. Chiasson took the students to Skills Saskatchewan competition on April 16 in Moose Jaw. Brock, Sean, Brett and James won silver at the event and effectively their competition year was done. The team disbanded and the robot, affectionately called “The Dragon”, was dismantled and placed on a shelf for future students to view in the “Robot Museum”.

Unexpectedly, Mr. Chiasson received a phone call from Skills Saskatchewan late the evening of Monday, May 25th. The gold medal team had withdrawn meaning that, if they were ready, willing and able, the YRHS team would represent Saskatchewan at SCNC. The students decided unanimously to take on the last-minute challenge meaning they had to be in Saskatoon by Wednesday afternoon for opening ceremonies. Robot pieces were packed up to be assembled in a hotel room in Saskatoon and, not only was the robot put back together, but improvement modifications were made. Essentially, they had 1 ½ days to prepare with competitions held Thursday and Friday for seeding purposes. The final was held the afternoon of Friday, May 29.

Mr. Chiasson states that, “Everyone was impressed with their design. They were the only team to come up with a conveyor belt idea. The concept was based on agriculture and specifically the idea of a combine belt to pick up a large number of pieces; in this case, golf balls, straight pipes and 90 degree angle pipes. This was the greatest

challenge – how do you pick up a variety of items in the shortest amount of time to deposit them on a tiered structure for points? The robot was put to the test as, without a test of the modifications, the robot went straight into competition. The students also took the time to develop a strategy as to how best to approach the matches which made the difference. Not only did they get more points with their design but they were one of the few robots that had the ability to make it harder for other teams to collect their pieces.”

The YRHS students made it to the gold medal round where they lost the first match to Newfoundland. In the double knockout format, once a team loses 2 matches, they are out of the competition. The team made it to the final undefeated meaning they could lose the first match to force a sudden death match. The students had previously defeated Newfoundland on the A-side which meant both now had one loss and, with a Saskatchewan win in the second match, they were declared national champions.

“We are very proud of our students in this amazing achievement,” states Lois Smandych, Board Chair. “What I am personally most impressed with are the things I have heard from Mr. Chiasson in the exemplary way the students handled themselves at competition. The students chose, through no prompting from anyone, to shake hands with all of their opponents prior to every match. Coaches and officials commented that the team exemplified what the competition was all about in terms of their positive attitude and how they handled themselves. They were excellent ambassadors for their school, the division and the province and we want to congratulate these fine young gentleman who no doubt have very bright futures ahead of them. Mr. Chiasson has once again shown his dedication to this up and coming area of instruction in the Practical and Applied Arts curriculum and we are happy to see this non-traditional class continue for students.”

There were other Good Spirit School Division students who took part in and experienced success at the SCNC. Austin Swiderski from Invermay School won a silver medal in the outdoor power and recreation equipment category and Nicholas Sylvester from Melville Comprehensive School won a bronze medal in welding. YRHS Grade 9 students Blake Chiasson and Matthew Breitkreuz took part in the newly introduced STEM automation controls competition; these students did not medal but, as they are only in Grade 9 competing against senior high school students, they have the potential to place in future years.

For further information, contact Mr. Kevin Chiasson at 306-786-5560 or Mr. Dwayne Reeve, Director of Education, at 306-786-5500.

The Good Spirit School Division provides education opportunities to over 6,000 students operating 29 schools in 18 communities throughout East Central Saskatchewan. Caring for children in a supportive environment is as important as offering excellence in educational programming. Our public schools value belonging, respect, responsibility, learning and nurturing by ensuring “Students Come First”. Visit us at www.gssd.ca; contact 306-786-5500 or 1-866-390-0773.

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Contact Information:
Lynel Martinuk, Communications Coordinator
Phn 306-786-5501; Fax 306-783-0355
Email: lmartinuk@mail.gssd.ca