

Join the Robotics Fever!

*Max S. Hayes Vocational High School
Cleveland, Ohio*

Students at Max S. Hayes Vocational High School caught robotics fever! The school robotics team, the Surgeons of Steel, cut, welded, assembled, and programmed its own unique robots for participation in the annual FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) competition. In cooperation with corporate and community sponsors, the team designed and built Chaos, a robot that won the 2003 Buckeye Regional Championship and now serves as the prototype for all Cleveland TechWorks teams.

Cleveland TechWorks is a nonprofit organization composed of area business, education, government, and community service leaders. The organization created the Northeast Ohio Robotics Institute, and is instrumental in coordinating the region's continued success in the FIRST competitions and other workforce development activities. Hayes Vocational High hosts the Institute, where the Surgeons of Steel team works cooperatively with 15 diverse schools throughout the Greater Cleveland area in preparing robots for the FIRST competition. In order to spread the word about FIRST, the Surgeons of Steel created recruitment videos, posters, fliers, banners, and a web site. They were also successful in contacting the press. The team appeared in a variety of media, from the school newspaper to national television.

As the robotics program costs over \$20,000 to implement, the Surgeons of Steel, along with the school's Action Team for Partnerships, secured sponsorship from 15 corporate and community sponsors. The Cleveland Municipal School District and the 21st Century program provided assistance. Local corpora-

tions donated time, materials, and some funds, while the MBNA and Schott foundations, as well as the Cleveland Workforce Investment Act, provided larger-scale funding. Cuyahoga Community College offered two college credit robotics classes to students on the robotics team. NASA, Cleveland State University, the Ford Motor Company, and the QSS Group completed the partnership. These organizations brought in engineers to help the students hone their robotics skills.

Working with robotics allowed the students to make real-life connections with their math, science, and technology classes. This influenced the students' career aspirations, inspiring them to further their studies in engineering, the sciences, and design. Their excitement proved to be contagious. Encouraged by their teenagers' interest, parents became more involved with their students' education. Teachers noticed a renewed commitment on the part of students to get to school on time and make more of an effort in their classes.

The school's principal deemed the Surgeons of Steel a big success, predicting that, due to the robotics program, "The school will be viewed as a family of educators with common goals and a reputation for excellence that will draw students from the Greater Cleveland area."

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