



Robotics team wins award

30-second animated safety video wins

Staff report

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The Burning Magnetos, a robotics team composed of Lowcountry area high school students, got off to a great start to the 2009 FIRST Robotics competition when they found out on Jan. 3 that they were the winners of the safety animation challenge.

Teams from across the globe waited for the Jan. 3 announcement of the 2009 playing rules for the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) competition. The Magnetos, however, were waiting with a little more excitement as they already knew they were one of six finalists for the animation contest.

Under the supervision of Elizabeth Barndollar and Larry Zimmerman, animation professionals working for local defense contractor BAE Systems Inc. and Kim Boyce, the Burning Magnetos' animation sub-team successfully completed the challenge of developing and submitting an innovative 30-second animated safety video. It is the third time that the team has won the safety animation competition, in addition to several other awards in its nine seasons of competition.

The team, coordinated by Janice Jolly of Dorchester 2 Schools and sponsored by several local businesses, is composed of five sub teams; mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, communications, inventor and animation. The team is mentored by technical and business professionals and volunteers from Bosch, BAE Systems and SPAWAR Systems Center Atlantic.

"The award for safety animation is just the start of hopefully another successful FIRST Robotics season for Team 342, The Burning Magnetos," said Hank Bennett of Robert Bosch. "This year's entire team, with the addition of BAE Systems, should be a great one. It is rewarding and exciting to see these young students, our future, learning together and working as hard as they have already and will be over the next few months to make this year's project a success."

Kris Busch, vice president for BAE Systems also commented on the upcoming season.

"I am excited about our partnership with Bosch, the school districts and other local businesses involved in the development of our next generation engineers and business leaders," he said. "FIRST offers an opportunity for every young student to realize the challenges and existential pleasures of engineering and team work and gives them an avenue to work with professionals in the field. This is just as much fun for us as it is for the kids".

The announcement officially kicked off the season with a demonstration of this year's game, Lunacy. The game will be played on a low-friction playing field designed to simulate the gravity of the moon. Robots can score points by throwing balls into the trailers of opposing teams' robots.

For the next six weeks the team will be meeting daily to brainstorm, conceptualize, build, test and ship the robot. Following the build and submission The Burning Magnetos will compete in two regionals in March with hopes of qualifying for the national competition.

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