

ACPS teams headed to world robotics competition, two teams win championships at regional contest

Three teams from Alachua County Public Schools have qualified for the prestigious VEX Robotics World Championship in May in Dallas, two of them by winning the top awards at the recent North/Central Florida VEX Robotics Competition

Eastside High School's *Drumroll Please* team won the VEX V5 High School Tournament Champions Award at the competition, which covers about half the districts in the state. The team, including members Aidan Badea-Bondoc, Michael Soukarov and Henry Kaufman and coached by math teacher Brittany Wishin, also won the Amaze Award in their division. According to the Robotics Education and Competition (REC) Foundation, which manages the VEX robotics programs, "the Amaze Award recognizes a consistently high-performing and competitive robot." The V5 division is for 8-12th grade students who build, program and compete with metal robots.

Westwood Middle School's *PHAZE* team won the V5 Middle School Tournament Champions Award and the Design Award, which "recognizes a team's ability to document and explain their engineering design process through an engineering notebook and team interview." (DEC) The *PHAZE* team, coached by robotics teacher David Sankey, includes members James Cerullo, Orlando Kernaghan-Ruiz and Calvin Guthrie.

Another Westwood team has also punched its ticket to Dallas. Team *We're better-er-er-er* won the Create Award in the VEX IQ Middle School division, which involves robots made of plastic. The Create Award, which is also an automatic qualifier for the world competition, "recognizes a creative engineering design solution to the challenges of the competition." (DEC). Team *We're better-er-er-er* includes Logan Knudson, Sonty Valverde and Grayson Wilkins.

The VEX Robotics World Championship will be held May 6-14 at the Kay Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center in Dallas. The tournament brings together the top robotics teams from around the globe and is recognized as the largest robotics competition in the world. It was established in 2007 to promote students' interest and skills in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).



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