Reflect...Transform...Lead

Arkansas Strive, sponsored by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, is a professional development program for 7-12th grade STEM teachers. In partnership with businesses and teachers across the state, UA Little Rock is working to grow a more capable and qualified workforce in all parts of the state by providing opportunities in historically underserved communities where motivated teachers complete an internship with their local businesses. Participants learn about the diversity of jobs that require STEM skills, and how to implement that knowledge to enhance the classroom for their students. Click here for additional information on Arkansas Strive!

The all-girls Cedar Ridge Robotics Team is made up of five freshmen and their one sophomore captain. Two of the girls, Madison Ireland and Ashley Cleveland, led the team as the only returning team members from the previous year. In the previous five years of the school’s robotics program, the school had participated in FIRST Robotics.

Because of the cost of the program, the team was able to build only one robot and compete in one or two competitions per year. That team was made up of mostly boys, so the girls, who usually worked in the background, often felt like they didn’t know much about the designing, building, and programming of the robot.

One of the teams formed was the all-girls team, VRC team #72562A. The team, led by Maddie and Ashley and mentored by Dr. Judy Butler, also included Gabby Vascoder, Lauren Klindworth, Laura Cullum, and Jasmine Lisenby. The team decided to build a robot with a four-bar double reverse life—a challenging design—for competitions. The robot did well, and the team continued to improve its design at the four subsequent competitions they attended.

Two weeks before the last open competition, Ashley and Maddie decided to try a new approach to the challenge and started on a new robot; however, they could not get their new robot completed in time for the last competition. So, they decided to use their original robot affectionately named “Carl.” “Carl” performed well after the final changes were made but not enough to win the tournament.

Unexpectedly, the team received a “wild card” invitation to the state competition at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. Dr. Butler was unable to chaperone the team due to a previous commitment, so another school employee, Kelly Branscum, stepped in.

When the team arrived for competition the next morning, the judges told them they would be disqualified for using PVC pipes as spacers throughout the shooting mechanism. However, the lead inspector told the team that they had 40 minutes to remove the PVC pipe to pass inspection.

The team came up with a plan: Gabby and Jasmine would hold the sprockets apart, while Maddie removed the PVC spacers. Finally, Ashley and Lauren put in new legal spacers. Within the 40-minute timeline, the robot passed inspection and was ready to compete.

After the competition, the judges were so impressed with Team 72562A that they awarded them the Judge’s Award, the team’s first award. It’s proudly displayed in the robotics room.
Clarksville FFA Chapter Help Nebraska Farmers Statewide Effort to Collect Supplies

The Clarksville High School Agricultural Education and FFA Chapter coordinated a statewide effort to collect items including fencing supplies, cattle vaccinations, milk replacements, and feeders to donate to farmers devastated by flooding in Nebraska. The Clarksville chapter, along with members from Carlisle, Dover, Two Rivers, Harrison, Star City, Rison, Genoa Central, and Greene County Tech, are collecting items across the state and will deliver to FFA Chapters in Nebraska to distribute in their local communities. A final collection will be gathered at the Arkansas FFA State Career Development Contests on April 4-5 in Fayetteville.

Skills USA Competition at ASU-Mid South Academies at West Memphis Students Shine!

Forty-one students from the Academies of West Memphis recently competed in the Skills USA Competition at ASU Mid-South. The competition is part of AWM’s charter that prepares students for professions immediately after they graduate high school. Students in grades 10-12 take classes at ASU Mid-South to learn anything from computer engineering to careers in digital media, diesel mechanics, welding, and the medical profession. The program focuses on the business industry and technical classes. The competition gives the students a chance to apply the skills they’ve learned. Deserving students will then advance to state competition in April 2019 at Hot Springs.

Meeting Industry Demands in Technology
NWACC’s New Integrated Design Lab

Since its ground breaking in January, the new Integrated Design Lab (IDL) on the NWACC Bentonville campus continues to make progress. The IDL will provide needed classroom and lab space for key academic programs in visual arts and construction technology. Both programs represent significantly growing career fields in NW Arkansas. The structure will also house space that supports general fine arts, sculpture, ceramics, and a Fab Lab with 3D printers, a CNC router, laser cutting equipment, and other tools. The programs offered will promote entrepreneurship and innovation.