

CL-B Robotics teams hosted first class event Saturday

By Allan Olson

"The world is asking for more engineers, and we're trying to be part of filling that niche through FIRST and robotics," said Duluth East Robotics mentor and retired biology and physical science teacher Tim Velner at the Northern Minnesota Robotics Conference Tournament Championship held at Cass Lake-Bena High School on Saturday, October 28. "For kids that want to be involved in robotics, there's a role for everyone.

They don't have to be the best at building things with their hands, but if they can build websites, interact with other teams, make swag or a whole host of other things, they, too, could be part of something big. Unlike sports, this is something that every kid can have the opportunity to turn professional at."

The reality of hosting such a big event in Cass Lake relied on several major components coming together – getting the field, getting the teams to participate, and most importantly, getting

volunteers familiar with FIRST Robotics and local volunteers to work together to pull it off. The Robotics mentors at CL-B – Jesse Frost, Sydney Harper and Matt Wendland – worked hard behind the scenes to be able to get those key volunteers together, and finally everything was arranged and the event was a go. Then it was just a matter of field set up, event day competition and field tear down. The field set-up started on Saturday, October 28. The field set-up started on Saturday, October 28. The field set-up started on Saturday, October 28. Robotics..... to page 3



Cass Lake Bena boys team #3275 The Regulators – came in second place on Saturday, October 28 at the Northern Minnesota Robotics Conference at Cass Lake-Bena schools. The alliance captain of the team was #3750 Gator Robotics from Badger and their alliance partner was team #3102 Nevis Tech No Tigers. Photos by Allan Olson.



The team members of #3134 The Accelerators came in fourth place overall after the final alliances were selected for the evening on Saturday, October 28.

The alliance captain of the team was #3750 Gator Robotics from Badger and their alliance partner was team #3102 Nevis Tech No Tigers. The team members of #3134 The Accelerators came in fourth place overall after the final alliances were selected for the evening on Saturday, October 28. Cass Lake Times NMRC at Cass Lake Bena 1 of 2

Cass Lake-Bena to host Robotics event Saturday

By Allan Olson

The first Robotics event to be recognized by the Minnesota State High School League will be held on Saturday, October 28, at the Cass Lake-Bena High School.

According to Jesse Frost, CL-B teacher and Robotics Advisor the Northern Minnesota Robotics Conference (soon to be designated as a non-profit) started with a group of 4-5 local teams and has now grown to about 19-20 teams. "We are doing this for several reasons," Frost explained, "including network and collaboration, possible greater fundraising opportunities, and to just help each other out."

He said that the urban areas of the state hold similar events throughout the year which they call "hubs" or "alliances" at which they meet up and help each other out and pitch ideas.

"We really wanted to do the same thing here," Frost said. "We want to focus on First Robotics Competition and probably eventually move into looking at VEX and Lego League and other STEM oriented programs. In addition, this will help with team sustainability. A lot of teams get an initial start-up grant that is good for up to a couple years, but then most of them struggle with fundraising after that. We might not be able to help teams financially, but we want to support them the best we can. That includes giving them ideas on how to secure additional financial support to keep their teams going."

This conference is expected to draw about 19 teams with about 250 students, 40 coaches and 70 volunteers coming from all across the state of Minnesota, and even one participant from Illinois. Those teams hail from schools

ranging east to west across Minnesota from Duluth on the east into North Dakota on the west, north to Badger and south to near St. Cloud, and all areas in between.

The opening ceremony event will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, with qualification matches starting at approximately 9 a.m. and continuing through lunch. Elimination matches will follow. Each team will participate in 10-12 matches, and there will be four alliances formed for the final rounds, with the game format and board to follow the regional match format used this past spring. The competition is expected to last until approximately 5 p.m.

As of press time, there are nine different colleges planning to attend the conference and have booths set up with recruitment information: St. Cloud State, Bemidji State, Northwest Tech, Leech Lake Tribal College, Red Lake Nations College, U of M Crookston, Alexandria Tech, Fond Du Lac Community College and the MN Army National Guard. In addition, there will be volunteer judges present to monitor the competition and hand out special awards at the conclusion, similar to any FIRST Robotics event. Those awards will include Engineering Design, Team Spirit and In the Future. Frost said they would like to include an All-Academic award as well, and possibly even offer a scholarship to a student.

Volunteers will start the basic set-up process of the field on Wednesday evening or Thursday morning, with the majority of the field set up occurring on Friday, when the rest of the key volunteers will be on site to help with the assembly process. Frost helped with



The Cass Lake-Bena High School will be the site of a robotics event on Saturday, October 28. With our two home teams hosting the event and 17 other teams attending, it's going to be a busy day. The Accelerators (pictured at the regional event in Duluth in March) and other teams will try to get their robots to cruise through the field elements and make the climb before the final buzzer sounds. Come on out to the CL-B gym and check out the excitement for yourself. File photo by Allan Olson.

the set-up at the last event in Duluth in August, and again most recently at an event in Roseville where he and other volunteers also received additional training. The field took about six hours to set up in Roseville, and 2.5 hours to take down.

"I will be very happy if it only takes us six

hours, but I expect it to take significantly longer," he said.

Those volunteers will include Sydney Mosher, a UND student and former Robotics student, will be the lead field announcer. Mosher was one of the two field announcers at the Duluth meet in August. Also learning

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the ropes will be local announcer Matt Gefre, who has announced several football games and other games and is a CLB youth football coach.

Four judges will be networking on the Engineering award, including former BSU professor Elaine Hoffman, along with three volunteers from Air Corps Aviation – Randy Kraft, Rob Lindberry and Kris Hughes. The Team Spirit award will be judged by another BSU representative – Bob Strand.

The field volunteers will consist of students and mentors from CLB and other schools, including Nevis. Traveling the furthest to assist at the event will be Alan Skierkiewicz of Illinois. He is the chief Robotics Inspector for First Robotics.

Former Robotics student and CL-B graduate Ryan Baird and CL-B middle school teacher Linsey Strand also received training in scorekeeping at the Roseville event, and both will be assisting at the CL-B event.

"The process of preparing for this event has taken a lot of work and a lot of hours," Frost said. "I'm looking forward to hosting a successful event. I will have about a month off before the next build season begins, and I expect to put in lots of hours with the students again."

Volunteers at the conference will be fed by Fatguy Catering, and the teams that have pre-paid for the meal on Saturday will be fed by Erberts and Gerberts.

"We really hope that having this event right here in Cass Lake will generate more interest among our students, and possibly expand our volunteer/mentor base and our donor base as well," Frost said. "It will give us an opportunity to do more local networking, and to promote and showcase Science, Technology, Engineering and Math."

The event will be held in the main Cass

Lake-Bena High School gym, which will be surrounded by the pit areas for the robot teams. Safety glasses must be worn in the pits.

Concessions will be available for purchase; admission to the event is free. The event will be live-streamed by the Nevis Tech-No-Tigers Team #3102 on Twitch or You Tube – as of press time that information was still to be determined.

Local sponsors for the event include Western Bank of Cass Lake, Erberts and Gerberts, MiniMart, CheWe, LL DRM, Team Industries, Teal's Market, MCT, MN Army National Guard and CL-B Schools.

For more information about the event, you can contact CL-B Robotics Advisor Jesse Frost at (218) 556-8978 or check out Cass Lake Bena Robotics Teams on Facebook.

Participating Teams:

876 - Northwood High School and Hatton High School in Hatton/Northwood, North Dakota.

- 3036 - Deer River.
- 3102 - Tech-No-Tigers – Nevis.
- 3134 - The Accelerators – Cass Lake-Bena.
- 3275 - The Regulators – Cass Lake-Bena.
- 3277 - ProDigi –Thief River Falls.
- 3278 - QWERTY Robotics – Detroit Lakes.
- 3294 - Backwoods Engineers – Pine River.
- 3367 - Ogichidaa Robotics – Circle of Life Survival School, White Earth.
- 3750 - Gator Robotics – Badger.
- 4181 - Quack Attack – Blackduck.
- 4480 - UC-Botics – Upsala.
- 4539 - KAOTIC Robotics – Frazee.
- 4674 - RoboJacks – Bemidji.
- 5253 - Backwoods Bots – Bigfork.
- 6453 - Bog Bots – Kelliher.
- 4623 - Flyer Robotics – Little Falls.
- 6720 - Los Robos – Walker.
- 3754 - TrekNorth Sundogs – Bemidji.



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Northern Minnesota Robotics Conference highlights



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