NOTEBOOK

FIRST robotics competition winners

Thirteen Long Island teams were winners in a regional competition that challenged teens to build robots from a kit of parts to breach opposing defenses on a castle-styled field.

Students from 51 high schools battled last month in the 17th annual Long Island Regional FIRST Robotics Competition at Hofstra University. This year's theme, "FIRST Stronghold," asked three-team alliances to score points by shooting boulders through goals in an opponent's tower and then attempting to scale the tower. FIRST stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology."

Three teams — Hurricane Floyd (Team #287) of Mastic Beach; Sachem Aftershock (Team #263) of Lake Ronkonkoma; and TEAM R.I.C.E. (Team #870) of Southold — advanced to the FIRST Robotics Championship in St. Louis on April 27-30.

Other local winners were: The Phi-Kings (Team #4567) of Seaford, Musical Theme Award; CIBorgs (Team #4006) of Central Islip, Imagery Award in honor of Jack Kamen; Hurricane Floyd (Team #287), Rockwell Automation Innovation in Control Award; Hurricanes (Team #3171) of Westhampton Beach, Xerox Creativity Award; The Mechanical Bulls (Team #810) of Smithtown, Delphi Excellence in Engineering Award; Pierson Whalers (Team #28) of Sag Harbor, Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers Entrepreneurship Award; Hicksville J-Birds (Team #1468) of Hicksville, General Motors Industrial Design Award; Mohawks (Team #329) of Medford, Johnson & Johnson Gracious Professionalism and Regional Finalist #2 awards; Red Dragons (Team #527) of North Massapequa, Chrysler Team Spirit Award; Rebels (Team #2638) of Great Neck, Underwriters Laboratories Industrial Safety Award; TEAM R.I.C.E. (Team #870), Regional Finalist #1 and Regional Engineering Inspiration awards; CyberHawks (Team #2875) of Cold Spring Harbor, Regional Finalist #3 Award.

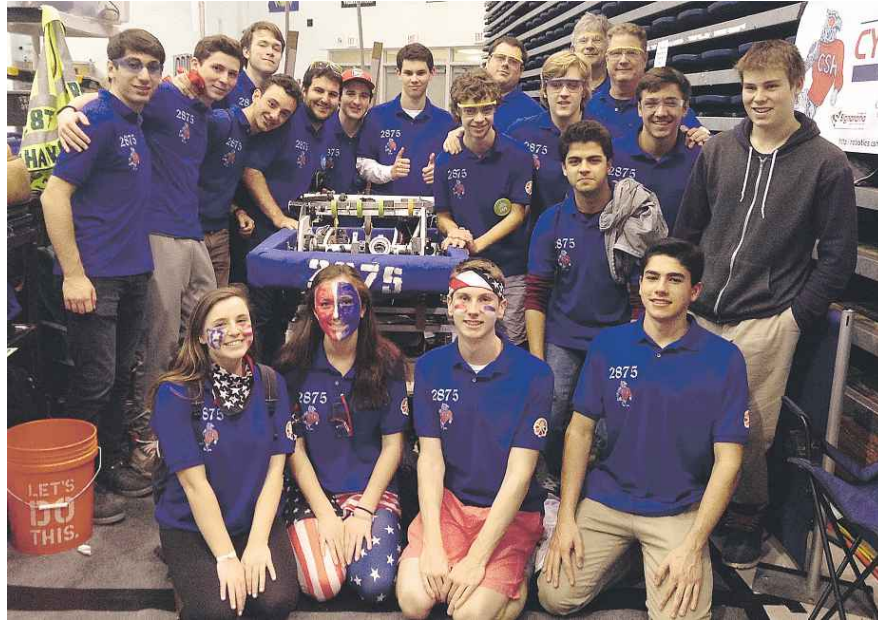The event was sponsored by the School-Business Partnerships of Long Island.

GLEN COVE

Food pantry

Robert M. Finley Middle School has opened a pantry for residents in need.

The pantry, open on Fridays from 3-5 p.m., was created by the school's Kiwanis Builders Club, National Junior Honor Society and Student Council as part of a collaboration with international charity and educational partner WE Free the Children.

Finley students collected food from relatives, friends and neighbors, and Glen Cove High School's athletic teams and a local Boy Scout troop hosted food drives.

The CyberHawks of Cold Spring Harbor were among the award winners at the Long Island Regional FIRST Robotics Competition at Hofstra University.

COLD SPRING HARBOR SCHOOL DISTRICT

MASSAPEQUA

Health Spark!

A team from Massapequa High School's Healthcare Explorers Club placed second and won a $1,500 prize in the Northwell Health Spark! Challenge, a contest in which students visit a Northwell facility to learn about health-care careers and vie in an advertising poster competition based on a career they observed.

First place went to Richmond Hill High School.

Massapequa's team visited the Cohen Children's Medical Center in New Hyde Park, where they participated in a mock pediatric trauma scenario.

ISLANDWIDE

Autism awareness

Long Island schools hosted activities during April to raise awareness and funds for autism in recognition of National Autism Awareness Month.

In East Meadow, Woodland Middle School installed blue gel pieces in hallway lights, and technology teachers Rich Lalier and Sam Levant handcrafted a wooden puzzle piece for display. Meanwhile, Bowling Green Elementary School kids learned how to treat peers who have autism and wrote facts about the disorder on puzzle pieces.

In West Hempstead, kindergartners at Chestnut Street Elementary School watched a video about autism and learned the importance of accepting people's differences. They also received certificates for "being a good friend to kids with autism," school officials said.

In East Rockaway, the Junior-Senior High School's National Honor Society and Dignity Club sold items ranging from bracelets to baked goods to raise $532 for Autism Speaks. **— MICHAEL R EBERT**

NORTH SHORE SCHOOL DISTRICT

PICKING UP STEAM

Glenwood Landing Elementary School recently held a ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil a new STEAM Lab, standing for science, technology, engineering, art and math. Last year's fourth-graders worked with their teachers to design, develop and stock the lab.

WAY TO GO!

Nick Liuzzi

MVP of FIRST Robotics Competition

Seaford High School senior Nick Liuzzi was named Most Valuable Player of the Long Island Regional FIRST Robotics Competition — the contest's highest individual honor.

Liuzzi, president of the school's 35-member robotics team, was selected for the award from among more than 4,000 students on 51 teams. The competition was held April 1-2 at Hofstra University. FIRST stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology."

SEAFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

"I was extremely honored, because there's so many students around Long Island who work so hard," Liuzzi, 17, said of winning MVP. To be considered, he said he first was nominated as his team's MVP and then was selected by judges to receive the overall award.

The tech-minded teenager also composed an electronic song that won the competition's musical theme contest in January, and it was played during matches at the regional event. For winning that contest, the Seaford robotics team, titled "The Phi-Kings" (Team #4567), was awarded a $1,000 check.

Liuzzi, who is salutatorian of his graduating class, is president of the school's mathletes team and a member of Model Congress, National Honor Society, and the barbershop choir and select choir. He also serves as a DJ at local parties in his spare time.

The competition was sponsored by the School-Business Partnerships of Long Island.

— MICHAEL R. EBERT

NOMINATE A STUDENT for Way to Go! Send details and photograph to Michael Ebert, Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747 or email michael.ebert@newsday.com (emailed photos should be high-resolution). Photos cannot be returned and may be used in other publications affiliated with Newsday.