



Floydbots win big

The Floydbots, the William Floyd Elementary School Robotics team, recently took fifth place at the SBPLI-FIRST Lego League Qualifier held at Central Islip High School, earning the right to compete against 39 other teams from Long Island at the Lego League Championship to be held at Longwood High School on Sunday, March 5. Only the top eight teams from each of the five qualifying tournaments qualified for the championship. "I am very proud of what the Floydbots team has accomplished to this point," said Dr. Keith Fasciana, principal of William Floyd Elementary School. "We started this program so our students could learn robotics, engineering, coding, how to find solutions and work as a team. The program has already paid dividends to all of the students that are involved." FIRST Lego League is a technology-focused competition for children in grades four through eight, which combines a hands-on interactive robotics program with a sports-like atmosphere. This year's challenge, "Animal Allies," tasked students with identifying, designing and sharing a solution involving the interaction of humans and animals. "The Floydbots discussed many different relationships before choosing our relationship with bees," said Alba Salazar, William Floyd Elementary School fifth-grade teacher and Floydbots advisor. "It all started with a desire to understand how a beekeeper suit works, and ended with a huge concern that bees were dying at an alarming rate. The Floydbots learned that bees are needed for cross-pollination and that without pollination, there would no more fruits and vegetables that people and other living things need." For the research project, the team worked on coming up with a solution to the problem. They decided to encourage people to start bee gardens by planting flowers and plants that are native to the region. Students felt that a way to get people to plant gardens is by giving them a reward, such as a tax break for doing something environmentally friendly. Students wrote to several congressional representatives to promote the idea. To present their work, the team performed a skit for the judges about a very concerned Queen Bee (Julia Abbaticchio) who decided to take a trip with her sidekick, worker bee Jamie (Jamie Gagliardo) to see the Floydbots. They received news and information from the Floydbots that gave them hope, but later returned to the once-thriving hive, only to find just one lonely drone bee (Rafay Cheema) left. For their efforts, the Floydbots won the Project Award for Presentation, which is given to a team that effectively communicates the problem they have identified and their proposed solution to the judges and other potential supporters.

Pictured: Members of the Floydbots team include: Julia Abbaticchio, Jamie Gagliardo, Rafay Cheema, Hazel Parente, Joshua Schultzer, Freddy Valdez, Christina Dykiv, Brady Miller, Aidan Monahan, Junai Crews and Max Heitman. Coaches include Alba Salazar and Joel Heitman, as well as the team's mentor, Jennifer Heitman. FIRST Lego League events are presented by the School-Business Partnerships of Long Island.