Chandler teams shine in Intel robotics tournament

More than 700 elementary and secondary school students from throughout the East Valley descended on Intel’s Chandler complex last month to vie for robotics distinction.

Of the Chandler teams competing in a FIRST Lego League regional tournament, two won big awards and two others qualified for the state tournament. And there were some individuals who won awards as well. Two Intel engineers, Rajnish Malik and Alan Tu, won the Best Volunteer Award and Best Coach Award, respectively. While Elaina Aslin, a senior at Arizona College Prep—East, earned the Best Youth Mentor Award. Coaches and mentors also included Rohita Shaila of Intel, Jennifer Warren of American Airlines and Mananul Datta of SunCon.

The tournament champion was The Resistance and another Chandler team called the Street Rats won the Core Values Award. Two other Chandler teams, the Golden Knights and the Techno Destroyers, qualified for the state tournament.

The Resistance, sponsored by the nonprofit Education Empowers and coached by Tu and mentored by Elain, comprises mainly ninth through eighth graders, although one member, Jesse Carter, is a ninth grade at Tempe Prep.

The other members include Ethan Aslin, a seventh grader at Kyrene Apyrene Middle School; Ria Nikola, an eighth grader at Higley Academy; and broccoli Sanders, an eighth grader at BASIS West. The Resistance developed a project designed to clean trash in public places with the capability of sorting and shredding, powered by solar panels.

“We had learned, through researching, that trash is a big problem in our community. We felt this was a big impact,” said Sahil.

After presenting this data, our team decided that this would be our project.”

Some members were inspired to join the team through their association with Education Empowers. Landis father is a co-founder with the nonprofit’s founder, Anna Polk, who is their mother. Like most of the participants in the tournament, Resistance members found the competition a fun challenge.

“It is fun overall to be able to find a problem and formulate a solution,” Sahil said. “It was also fun to be able to collaborate as a team and work together to create a working idea that formed into a real thing.”

Added Beside: “In addition to continuing to help me develop problem-solving skills and skills to research and solve real-life problems, this program helped me learn the importance of working as a team to get to the best decisions. I also learned the importance of core values such as inclusion while having fun and developing relationships with other students from different schools.

“In addition, the opportunity to get exposed to real scientists, engineers and experts in different fields to get more insight on solutions that can be used to solve problems encountered throughout the mission has been wonderful. Education Empowers also sponsored another trophy winner, the Street Rats, who were coached by Aimee Smith, Michael Mowery and Brian Romans. That team includes Aimee Prep eighth grader Connor Friend and three seventh graders: Harper Mowery of SunCon Junior High, Gabriel Garcia of Tempe Junior High and Tocantins of West Traditional Academy.

Their project involved floating cities.

“We wanted to explore potential solutions for traffic jams and increase urban populations,” said Sahil.

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