

## Elementary, middle school students tackle state robotics

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*Photo by Tracy Klimek/New Jersey Herald - Halstead School robotics Green Machine team members Noah Logan, left, 12, and Chris Martinez, right, 12, stand by their project Saturday, November 21, 2015, which is finding a way to recycle boxes and to protect the schools chrome books during Lafayette Township School's*

*Photo by Tracy Klimek/New Jersey*

LAFAYETTE -- A total of 18 teams from northern New Jersey, each consisting of approximately 10 students in grades 5-8, competed Saturday in the "Tiger's Cub" qualifying round of the annual state robotics championships.

The event, held at the Lafayette Township School, presented elementary and middle school students with a real-world engineering challenge in which they were tasked with developing LEGO-based robots capable of sorting and separating recyclable from non-recyclable trash.

The teams competed for recognition in six categories, which included performance-based awards as well as awards for upholding the core values of teamwork, collaborative effort and sportsmanship.

The winning teams in the various categories are noted below, along with the hometown, school or organization that each team represented:

- Project Award: Robostorms (Livingston)
- Robot Design Award: Robotica (St. Joseph Regional School, Newton)
- Robot Performance Award: Robostorms (Livingston)
- Core Values Award: Avengers (Long Pond Middle School, Andover Regional)
- Judges' Award: Flammadoreen (Riverdale Girl Scouts)
- Champions' Award: Lions (Rev. Brown School, Sparta)

The four teams with the most points earned the right to go on to the next phase of the New Jersey State Robotics Tournament, which will be held in December in Mount Olive.

Those teams included the the Lions, who had the highest point total, along with the three teams that finished as runners-up -- the Robostorms, the Avengers, and the Nanogurus (Morris Plains).

Nancy Estevez, a middle school science teacher at the Lafayette Township School, was the coordinator of Saturday's competition.

"This is my fifth year running the event, and it's really good for the students because it shows them real-life problems in need of solutions and the processes involved in coming up with those solutions," she said.

In preparation for the event, Estevez said she had her own students manually separate various items of trash thrown away during lunch.

The students found, among other things, that empty bags of potato chips could not be recycled.

"They learned a lot about what people throw away and what gets recycled and what can't be recycled," Estevez said.