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Newton Robotics Team Hosted FIRST Lego League Qualifier at Sparta Middle School

By JENNIFER DERICKS
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SPARTA, NJ - The gymnasium at Sparta Middle School was taken over by robots on November 19. The Newton Robotics team hosted the FIRST Lego League Qualifiers Event that included 13 middle school teams. The Newton Middle School team earned a couple of awards at the competition.

Technology teacher at Halsted Middle School James Hoffman organized the event, while coaching both the high school and middle school teams.

Costume clad members of Aperture, the Newton High School team ran the event including refereeing the challenges. They conducted the "Animal Allies" challenges on

three large tables. The fourth through eighth grade teams built robots out of Legos that were designed and programmed complete as many missions as possible in two and a half minutes.

The top three finishers at the Sparta Middle School Qualifier were:

Team #25320 "3ngineers" from Livingston

Team #26308 "Nano-Gurus 4.0" from Rockaway

Team #28805 "GHS Robotics from Green Township

These three teams advance to States at Mount Olive High School on December 3.

As is the case with the high school level FIRST teams, the younger teams are judged on more than the performance of the 'bot. Judges look for qualities including professionalism, teamwork, cooperation, respect.

The head referee was Edward Flynn. The head judges was Long Pond School math teacher Deborah Willemsen.

The event also had a community service component. According to Aperture Co-Captain and Public Relations Leader Liam Oakes, all participants were asked to bring donations to Manna House food pantry. A total of 1,583 items were collected, including a few for animals to be donated to Father John's Animal House.

Team #4103 "Fierce Felines" from Halsted Middle School won the donation challenge with a total of 676 items.

While they finished 11 of 13 teams they took home the Project Award. Oakes explained, to earn that award judges look for teams "whose quality research, innovative solutions,

community sharing and presentation best reflect an in-depth understanding of the scientific disciplines involved with the Project. In order to be eligible to win this award, each team was required to identify a problem when people and animals interact, and design a solution that makes the interaction better for animals, people, or both."

Edward Holder of the Halsted Middle School Team said, "We did better than last year."