

**FIGHTING PI WEEKLY****PANCAKE BREAKFAST FUNDRAISER  
SPAGHETTI DINNER FUNDRAISER****WRITTEN BY: TEAM 1718****FIRST:****The sport where  
anyone can turn pro !****UPCOMING  
EVENTS****JANUARY 8  
KICKOFF****JANUARY 9  
PANCAKE BKFST  
SEE ARTICLE →****FEBRUARY 22  
ROBOT BAG DAY****FEBRUARY 25  
SPAGHETTI DINNER****SPECIAL POINTS  
OF INTEREST**

- Team 1718 would like to thank all the sponsors, mentors and parents who made the 2010 season an exceptional and unforgettable experience. We look forward to your support in 2011 and will do our best to have another outstanding season.

The Fighting Pi Team will be hosting a pancake breakfast fund raiser with the Knights of Columbus on Sunday, Jan 9<sup>th</sup> at the Knight's Hall on North Avenue just south of Armada Village. That's the day after kickoff. We will be splitting any proceeds with the knights 50 / 50. We will have at least 10 team members there starting at 7:00 a.m., and working through 12:30. The breakfast opens to the public at 7:30 a.m. lasting about 3½ hours. The team will also have at least another additional 5 people arrive around 11:00 a.m. to help the original 10 cleanup after the breakfast. Mention this breakfast to your families, it's that much more money toward our fundraising efforts.

The team has also been fortunate enough to get the hall for our upcoming spaghetti

dinner. The Knights have graciously donated the facilities free of charge. Team 1718 will do all the cooking, serving, cleaning, etc. A lot of planning goes into these events. Mentor, Dan Kaltz, will be in contact with the Knights to find out how many people they normally get through their spaghetti dinners in order to help our planning.

It is highly likely that we will have most, if not all, team members in attendance. The Spaghetti Dinner will be on Friday, February 25<sup>th</sup>, time TBD. That's the Friday after bag day. Mark it and the pancake breakfast on your calendars. We hope to make a significant amount toward our fundraising efforts at these events from both food sales, and the upcoming tech raffle.

**TEAM 1718 BETA TESTERS  
WRITTEN BY: TREVOR GOOLSBY**

Last year, Team 1718 was privileged to participate in the 2010 FRC Software Beta Test, making sure programming software would run smoothly for the upcoming season. This year, Team 1718 was once again invited to help make sure that the 2011 FRC Software would be operational for the next season. Various programming changes were made to the FRC LabVIEW Software, including added safety features. FIRST also added programming interface for a motor controller network known as CAN, which gives teams the ability to track and limit valuable information about their sensors and motors.

The Beta Test ended when the Team 1718 Beta Testers, Jacob Caporuscio, Ted Binkowski, Melissa Milkowski, Trevor Goolsby, Michael Patrick, Kurt Wieber,

and Vincent Ragapp, gave a presentation demonstrating the new features of LabVIEW, as well as a tutorial for students wanting to learn LabVIEW on December 19th starting at 9:00 a.m. that lasted about four hours. Team 245 was the only team to come, but the team also made a copy of the presentation available online, so any team that could not come to the presentation would be able to view the information. The on line site is:

<http://www.chiefdelphi.com/forums/showthread.php?t=87848&highlight+Beta+Seminar>

The presentation was done at the Romeo Ford Engine Plant, and the entirety of the beta test was also done at the Plant with Tom Line mentoring.

## “HOW TO MAKE” PI, HISTORY ANIMATION

WRITTEN BY: JESSICA PAYNE

Over the past few years, Team 1718 has been striving toward having more of a Renaissance Man reputation, meaning that we want to become pros in every aspect of First Robotics. One of the things we've never done is a computer animation about the team, and we thought it would be interesting for others to be able to see the computer finesse that our team has. Since part of the curriculum for students at the Academy where Team 1718 is based is taking a computer class, two students, myself and Michael Graham, decided to put our knowledge to good use.

We as sophomores had been taught how to use Adobe Flash CS4 Professional, which is a computer animation program, so we thought it would be great to use that for our animation. With the help of Mrs. Denise Dawson, founder of Leaping Lizards animation studio, we got a hold of a few story boards and started drawing out what our animation would look like. We wanted it to be a running metaphor of the Fighting Pi, so we decided that our animation would be about making a pie. There are many different ingredients and steps needed to make a pie, and it is the same for building a successful robotics team. “Ingredients” such as teamwork and commitment are needed, and there were many steps taken to get where we are now.

We also wanted to have an open ended animation because the Fighting Pi will undoubtedly grow more as we gain more experience, so we want to be able to add on to the animation as we accomplish more in First Robotics. Making the story boards was a lot of fun because we

knew what the steps were to make a pie, and we had to figure out how to apply them to making a robotics team. We had a few teammates help us by writing down the accomplishments that we have had over the years, and also by telling us how it is you actually make a pie. We also had fun adding in a few inside jokes that only specific people on the team would understand.

Once the basic idea was put on paper, the real work started. We got a lot of our pictures from the internet, and they all had to be altered to fit in the animation. Michael had a laptop (albeit a slow one), which I used to run Photoshop, and Mrs. Carlson, the computer science teacher at the Academy, loaned us another one (which was a lot faster) that Michael used to run Flash. I edited the pictures in Photoshop, and then I used a flash drive to transfer them to Michael so he could put them in the animation. The whole transferring thing caused quite a bit of confusion. I'm not the most organized person in the world, and if you knew Michael, you'd know that he's at the bottom of the spectrum when it comes to organization skills. I think I must have photo-shopped some pictures at least three times because we kept misplacing the flash drives they were on or forgetting where on the computers we had saved them (and it didn't help that Michael had six of the exact same flash drives laying around). Eventually we got a method going that kept us from losing too many things, but before we figured that out, we misplaced something every time we worked on the animation.

At every team meeting, we worked

on it for at least a little while, and most of the time we managed to get at least part of a scene done (it takes a LONG time to make a computer animation). We were about 1/3 of the way done when the robotics season ended, so we started meeting at either my house or Michael's to work on the animation. Usually we met once a week, and we worked for about five or six hours. It took us the entire 2009-2010 robotics season, the entire summer, and into the 2010 school year to finish it, but we finally did about 4 weeks ago. Michael and I jointly put over 160 hours of work into this project, so we were relieved that it was finally done. We unveiled the finished product at the team Christmas party and can proudly say that it was a big hit. We are aspiring to get the animation on our website - [www.fightingpi.org](http://www.fightingpi.org) - so that anyone who wants to can see the fun replication of our team history.

The animation will be added onto as we accomplish more as a team, but we are also hoping to learn how to use the computer animation program 3DS-Max so that we can enter another animation in the competition for the Animation Award. By creating the computer animation with Flash and aspiring to create another in 3DS-Max, we hope to truly become a “Renaissance Man” kind of team. Using computer programs to create animated videos is a real challenge, and there is much to be gained by expanding our horizons and working toward learning new programs. A big part of FIRST robotics is about going above and beyond what is expected of you. By following that principle, we have become a force to be reckoned with, and we hope to continue that in the years to come.

**FIRST LEGO LEAGUE  
WRITTEN BY: KRYSTAL DIEL**

In Armada, there are two FIRST Lego League (FLL) teams that are being mentored by Team 1718. The Armada Falcons was mentored by Tom Line and his wife, Becky. The Lego Warriors was mentored by some of the student members on The Fighting Pi. FLL teams are comprised of 9-14 year olds with usually less than ten students on a team.

This year the theme was “Body Forward.” Some of the tasks that the robots had to complete in just two and a half minutes were repairing broken bones, moving a pace maker to a heart, and placing a stint in an artery. Not only did teams have to build and

program a robot to complete various tasks, students had to have a creative presentation in which they proposed a solution for some aspect of the human body. The Armada Falcons focused on a magic wand that could be used to heal skin injuries, while the Lego Warriors focused on a pair of glasses to correct color deficiency.

Both teams did superb at their competition, located in Flint, considering the fact that they are both rookie teams. The Armada Falcons’ robot received a performance score of 370 points out of a possible 400. They qualified for the Genesse Championship located in Genesse County. The Lego

Warriors were complimented by judges for their organizational skills in how they presented their project.

Not only did students learn valuable programming and problem solving skills, they learned about gracious professionalism and working together as a team. Over the course of approximately two months, they learned that the only way to accomplish everything was to work together. Students also had a tremendous amount of fun and one could overhear some excitedly remarking how they could not wait for high school to join the high school robotics team.

**TEAM 1718 CHRISTMAS PARTY  
WRITTEN BY: CRISTHIAN TOLLIS**

On December 18th, 2010, Team 1718, The Fighting Pi, held its annual Christmas party. It took place in the MA<sup>2</sup>S gallery, lasting 3 hours, starting from 4 p.m. The first thirty minutes were to socialize and let everyone see the faces of the new team members, with whom they’re going to work with on the team this season. The team then had dinner at 4:30 p.m. The team has a potluck dinner, where everyone on the team brings in a dish or an item to help feed everyone. Dinner lasted for about an hour, and Pi awards, which are like varsity letters, were then distributed to some of the members. Pi awards are earned for being on the team two years and maintaining good

grades and most important being a good role-model for everyone else.

Those receiving Pi Varsity Letters included: Ted Binkowski, Jacob Caporuscio, Krystal Diel, Trevor Goolsby, Rachel Goubert, Michael Graham, Alex Kesk and Eric Kosek. After the awards, Jessica Payne and Michael Graham showed off their Adobe flash animation to everyone. They worked for a year on the animation, and they put it together to show the teams history. They did a great job and I can say that most people thought it was terrific. The party was then ended by the team’s

annual white elephant gift exchange. Everyone, or almost everyone, brought in a gift so they could participate. The exchange itself is a great time, because some people could get something unwanted, like a toilet repair kit or a can of green beans, or they could get something as nice as a hot chocolate kit. It all depends on what people want. Playing cards were distributed to everyone participating and you went up as your card was called. People had the choice to take a gift from the table or to steal from someone else. The amount of steals on an item was limited to 3. The party is a good way for people to get to know each other and to see who they are going to spend the upcoming season with.

**MASB PRESENTATION**  
**WRITTEN BY: MELISSA MIKOLOWSKI**

If there was one statement about *FIRST* that is always true, it would be that *FIRST* provides an experience unlike any other. Along with the competitions, freedom, and encouragement to expand, the ability to participate in the Michigan Association of School Board's (MASB) seminar is one of the unique opportunities made available to *FIRST* students and alumni. The seminar began on Friday with an exhibit all day and the presentation to the Michigan school boards was not until Saturday morning.

We were assisted throughout the weekend by a team local to Grand Rapids who set up their

display on Thursday when we were not able to. Team 2771: Code Red, and Team 2604: Metal and Soul, team members were also next to us with their robot on Saturday during the presentation and stuck around afterwards to answer questions to interested board members. We got to speak to the familiar Armada school board member's faces and also give our information to many members from school districts entirely new to the organization.

The experience provided a jumpstart in their presentation and leadership skills to all members who attended the presentation. The students

attending the presentation from Team 1718 included: Krystal Diel, Alissa Gianferrara, Melissa Mikolowski, and Trevor Goolsby. The Alumni from the team were Chelsea Antilla and Paul Gianferrara, who gave his personal account of how *FIRST* shaped his life and how he now mentors the team. Mr. Antilla attended the presentation as a mentor for the team, who related to the other school board members by telling his own experience on a board and addressing the common concerns. The presentation was definitely a worthwhile experience and the team is very excited to hopefully be invited back next year.

**PI MENTOR TO BE WORLD COMPETITION JUDGE**  
**WRITTEN BY: MICHAEL GRAHAM**

*"There must be some mistake."* These are the words that ran through the mind of Rich Wahl, one of the mentors here on the Fighting Pi, when he found out he had been selected to be a judge at the upcoming 2011 FRC *FIRST* World Championship in St. Louis, Missouri. He will join a very select group of people who will be responsible for deciding the recipients of the various awards at *FIRST* competitions such as the coveted Chairman's Award.

With such a large number of district and regional competitions in the world and dozens of judges at each one, the candidate pool is so large that to be invited

to the FRC World Championship in St. Louis is a huge honor. But contrary to Mr. Wahl's initial thought, it is obvious there was no mistake. In his five (and counting) years with the Fighting Pi, Mr. Wahl has demonstrated over and over the same qualities found in those engineers and executives judging at competitions. He is intelligent, as shown by his vast stores of knowledge I have been able to tap into when I need assistance or information. His attention to detail is unrivaled - (did anyone say "business plan editing"?) - and he is also professional, possessing a calming demeanor and articulate communication skills.

Mr. Wahl's tradition of excellence has been obvious even in his earlier years, when as an Air Force flight instructor he was selected the "Outstanding Instructor Pilot of the "Year 1981" out of his 125 member instructor squadron. His reaction then also consisted of the thought, *"There's got to be a mistake"*. But there was no mistake then and there is none now. The people at *FIRST* recognize what Mr. Wahl's fellow servicemen recognized years ago, and he is sure to be an excellent judge in St. Louis. We just hope we can make it to see him there!