



TEAM 1718

# FIGHTING PI WEEKLY

DECEMBER 2011

## THE FIGHTING PI ON PARADE BY: ALYSA BRICE

### FIRST:

The only varsity sport where every participant can turn pro.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**JANUARY 7**  
2012 KICKOFF AT THE  
MACOMB ACADEMY  
FROM 9:00 TO 3:00

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- We need parents to sign up to provide for meals during the build season. Check your E-mail or contact Shawn Graham.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Fighting Pi entered a float into the annual Holly Days Parade in Armada. Team members met at Zeke Fetty's house the Friday and Saturday before the parade to assemble the float. Four robots, numerous strands of lights, a lighted tree, and one trailer and tractor later the float was ready to take its place in the lineup. Robots



from 2011, 2008, 2007, and 2006 were featured on the float in a scene resembling a family preparing for Christmas. The 2011 robot especially got into the season; after working so hard over the past year to hang inner-tubes, it tried its hand (or, more appropriately, rollers) at hanging a star on a tree. A very special thank you to the Fettys for the use of their barn and tractor!

## LIGHTING THE FUSE BY: MELISSA MIKOLOWSKI

The FIRST Season for 2012 is almost underway as teams, new and old, prepare for the kick-off coming up the first Saturday of the New Year. The most pressing and stressful times for teams, especially rookie teams, is the build season. Six weeks to design, build, program, and debug a fully functional robot to complete a task can easily frustrate an older team, let alone an inexperienced team. This year, Team 1718 has spread the message of FIRST and started teams in three schools in the Southeast area. These teams, from the Richmond School District, Pankow Center, and the Macomb International Academy, were invited to attend a presentation designed for the rookie teams. The first rookie presentation was given

to Richmond, Wednesday Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> and it explained all the aspects of FIRST and how the season works. The second presentation given Saturday, Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> was attended by Pankow and the Macomb International Academy. It broke down the build season and went in depth into mechanical and electrical systems. This presentation contained the suggested schedule teams should follow to successfully finish the robot in the time frame, advice for overcoming obstacles throughout build, and definitions for different parts necessary to each season. The first presenter, myself, a third year member on the team and Junior at Armada High School, explained the goals and processes of

Week One of the build season, which includes first coming up with a strategy based on the game and then designing parts of the robot to fit these strategies. For example, if the decided strategy is defense, then the robot should be designed as a defensive robot. After me, Alex Kesek, a fourth year member on the team and Senior at Armada High School, talked to the teams about creating sub-teams within the first week that work on various projects alongside the other groups. She described the importance and process of applying for awards. Tom and Trevor finished the presentation describing the purpose of electrical and mechanical systems and providing advice on which were the most effective or easiest to use.

## RICHMOND ROTARY PRESENTATION BY: MICHAEL GRAHAM

On Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, The Fighting Pi was invited to present to the Richmond Rotary Club at their meeting place, Brengman's Inn Land Restaurant. Three students- Kurt Wieber, Melissa Mikolowski, and myself- were selected to speak on behalf of the team. We wish we could have brought more, but the rotary club generously invited us to have lunch with them, and if we had brought an entire team of hungry, teenage, male engineers we very likely would have eaten Brengman's out of business.

During lunch we had the opportunity to speak with the members of the Rotary, and they were all very interested to hear about our personal experiences on Team 1718, as well as converse about more generic topics such as college, current events, and whether we would like some more cake to go with those mashed potatoes (we sure would, thank you very much). One Rotary member was nice enough to buy us tickets for a raffle they were holding. Soon enough lunch was over and it was time for our presentation.

Kurt started us off with some background information about FIRST robotics. The Rotary members seemed quite surprised and impressed to find that we were only given six weeks to design, build, and test a robot. Next Kurt highlighted Team 1718's recent accomplishments, such as qualifying for the world championship and winning district Chairman's Awards for the past two years. He did it well too, proving himself to be quite the

salesman; if we were a corporation I bet our stock would have jumped a good number of points after his speech. Of course, knowing the volatility of the stock market these days, who knows?

When Kurt finished I spoke about our partnership with the new team we started at Richmond High School. (It seems I've been doing a lot of talking about that recently - see my past few newsletter articles.) I told them all about the process of spurring interest, recruiting students, seeking out a teacher, and how they're now fully formed with their own team number- 4130 - and ready to go. The only thing I would say they don't have ready yet is a name, but it won't take them long to find a better candidate than the current front-runner, the "Fire Breathing Rubber Duckies". In any case, even if they chose that name they definitely can't get much nerdier than "The Fighting Pi." The members of the Rotary were very happy to hear about the team's founding; it definitely evokes a sense of pride in the community of Richmond.

Melissa ended the presentation by giving the club a taste of our "off-season". I use quotation marks because it's so busy there doesn't seem anything "off" about it, and that was definitely evident in Melissa's part, which was no easy task to memorize. Yet memorize it she did, and she told the Rotary about things we'd done such as showing at the Armada Fair, demoing at the Selfridge Air Show,

participating in the Henry Ford Maker Faire, and a great deal of others that I won't include here because if I did this newsletter would reach a length comparable to Ayn Rand's *Atlas Shrugged*.

The Rotary seemed to really enjoy the presentation and were genuinely awed by what goes on in FIRST Robotics, and more specifically with The Fighting Pi. It was my hope that we could articulate to them just how life-changing of a program FIRST is, and I could tell we were successful when one of the members told me that the part that struck her the most was when I said my time on The Fighting Pi had completely changed my career goals (I'm now looking at a career in business with an engineering background because of it).

They asked a lot of questions afterwards, and seemed particularly interested in the energy-saving LED light bulbs our team is selling. Information about them is going to go in their next meeting bulletin, and who knows, maybe they'll be interested in them enough for a presentation about them! (The LED salesman-geek that I am, I can always hope.) I'd like to give out a huge "Thank you" to Dr. Linda Olson, the superintendent of Richmond Community Schools and member of the Richmond Rotary Club, for coordinating the presentation. Thanks also to the Richmond Rotary for inviting us. We certainly had a great time and would love to present to them in the future.

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If you would like to be a team sponsor, contact Team 1718 Head Mentor,  
Mr. Roys at: [croys@armadaschools.org](mailto:croys@armadaschools.org) or work phone: 586-784-2173