



RoboRave brings science to life

April 4, 2016

Students build robots at RoboRave Rally

On March 5, more than 300 students tested their critical thinking and teamwork skills by building autonomous robots at the RoboRave Rally at Northern New Mexico College in Española.

Among the most impressive robots of the day was a Lego bot built and designed by Team Intergalactic at the Española YMCA Teen Center. The machine successfully crawled up a 60-degree ramp—the only robot of its kind to do so in RoboRave history.

FIRST Team 4153

FIRST Team 4153, aka the Los Alamos High School Robotics Club, was also at the event demonstrating its robots. (FIRST stands for For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology.) “I believe that FIRST Team 4153 can help inspire kids to pursue their passion in robotics,” says team mentor and Laboratory employee Andrew Erickson. “We like to support the RoboRave in hope of garnering enough interest to help start a high school robotics club someday soon in Pojoaque or Española.”

Erickson has been a team mentor for three years. “I enjoy mentoring the students and giving them hands on experience to solve real engineering challenges,” he says. “This is a great way for the Laboratory to support the community in a way that helps create future employees. Mentoring has also allowed me to re-engage with engineering, and I have learned a lot of cool new things that I probably wouldn’t have gotten the chance to otherwise.”

RoboRave was sponsored by Los Alamos National Laboratory and had participation from many Española, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe schools. Photo: John T. Denne

Science Showdown

While some of the 40 participating teams sent their robots through mazes and up inclines, others participated in a corresponding Science Showdown event, which featured booths from area institutions such as the Museum of Natural History, Explora Science Center, and the Pajarito Environmental Education Center. Staff from the Laboratory’s Bradbury Science Museum provided math- and science-themed puzzles.

Other activities included a giant inflatable planetarium and a make-your-own pinecone birdfeeder station.

Northern New Mexico students built and tested robots at the RoboRave Rally and Science Showdown at Northern New Mexico College in Española.

Get involved

Programs such as RoboRave and Science Showdown provide opportunities for hundreds of Northern New Mexico students to explore STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) areas, but hundreds more lack mentors and ultimately the chance to be involved.

In an effort to recruit more mentors, the local chapter of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) is seeking volunteers to lead teams in schools throughout the region. Interested parties should contact the local ASME chapter chair, [Mike Steinzig](#). Coaching support and limited funds may be available for new teams.

Community Connections features news and opportunities that grow out of the Laboratory's Good Neighbor Pledge: "To partner with our neighbors on strengthening math and science learning, diversifying the economy and expanding community giving in Northern New Mexico."

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