

From the Crow's Nest

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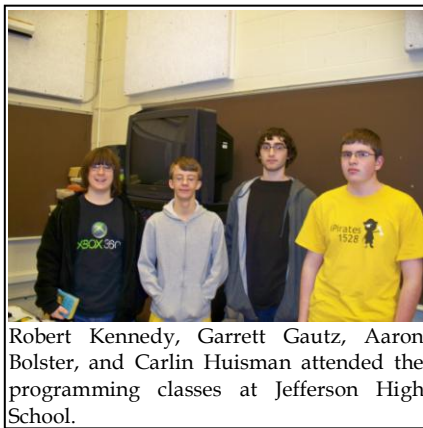
January 2010

Team News



By the time you receive this newsletter, the iPirates will be hip-deep in wrenches, computers, and wires. The team will be busy getting ready for our upcoming competitions in Ann Arbor and Detroit. Though shipmates are aware that competition will be stiff, they will use this opportunity to gain new knowledge and friendships.

Shipmates have worked hard since last year's competition to establish a mindset of both teamwork and continuous improvement. They have worked hard to build on our successes from previous years and improve where needed. This month, the iPirates will focus mostly on two areas that the team is going to need in order to improve.



Robert Kennedy, Garrett Gautz, Aaron Bolster, and Carlin Huisman attended the programming classes at Jefferson High School.

Programming

Last year, the team was made up of mostly freshmen with very little upper class support. This resulted in debilitating challenges both for programmers and robot operators. This year, the team took a proactive approach and joined with team 240, TEMPEST, from Jefferson High School and attended a programming class there.

Robert Kennedy, Garrett Gautz, Aaron Bolster, and Carlin Huisman all attended and completed the class, accompanied by senior mentor Richard McKinley.

Michelle Tracer graciously volunteered her time to teach both teams the art of using National Instruments® LabVIEW programming in relation to FRC robotics. She gave several homework assignments to the team, including creating a virtual vending machine.

The classes met for six weeks on both Tuesdays and Thursdays, just recently concluding. The students were then able to jump right in and apply their new found knowledge.

This year, Garrett and Carlin are taking the lead in this area of robotics development.

Chairman's Award

The Chairman's Award was created to keep the central focus of the FIRST Robotics Competition (FRC) on our ultimate goal of transforming culture to inspire greater levels of respect and honor for science and technology, as well as to encourage more of today's youth to become scientists, engineers, and technologists. This is the most prestigious award that FIRST offers. This award does not center around the robot or technology but how well the team inspires students, mentors and the community around them.

The team plans on competing for the regional award at both district events this year. Aaron Bolster, Saqib Penacha and Caleb Neal are taking the point in this endeavor. The application process includes an essay, presentation, and a video.📹

Shipmate of the Month



Ryan Huff

Ryan is in his second year on the team and is a sophomore. He is an honor roll student, not dissimilar to most iPirates shipmates.

Ryan is a valuable team member who continues to contribute to the team. Last year, Ryan actively participated in the building of the robot and attended both of the district events. Ryan volunteered his time at one of these events to help with the logistics of event administration.

Ryan also spent time helping to set up both the Michigan Advanced Robotics Competition off-season event and the FIRST LEGO® League event *Mission Possible*. Ryan has also helped raise money for the team and community by attending their car washes and Relay for Life.

Mr. Huff is anticipating an active season for 2010, where he will be able to help the team compete and perhaps bring another award to add to the team's trophy case.

Ryan is not just all about robots. He also participates in karate, biking and outdoor activities. Like the rest of the shipmates, he enjoys working with computers.

The iPirates enjoy Ryan's company and look forward to watching him continue to grow.📹

Upcoming Events



Ann Arbor District Event
March 12, 13

Wayne State District Event
March 19, 20

Windows 7



Unless you live under a rock, you've probably heard about the new Windows 7, codenamed Vienna. With the iPirates being the "super nerds" they are, they've checked it out. First, Windows 7 is compatible with virtually every computer built in the last few years. In December, Windows 7 became the factory standard for new computers. If you do not wish to buy a new computer, an upgrade CD is available for about \$120.

Pros: The new taskbar, dubbed the "SuperBar," makes everyday Windows use easier, grouping applications into single icons and integrating the Quick Launch bar into a fashion similar to Mac OS' dock. 7 also eases the process of networking the computer with other household systems including printers and other computers. The revolutionary HomeGroup makes all this possible with only a few clicks. Strong design and Microsoft don't always go together (just look at ME and Vista), but they sure do in Windows 7. New users may require some time to get used to the new taskbar and shortcut features, but they're a pleasure to use. Windows 7 ultimately integrates the power and compatibility of Windows XP, with the eye candy of Windows Vista.

Cons: While 7 outruns Microsoft's previous OS' in many aspects, there are still some programs that will run a bit slower on 7 than XP, as outlined at <http://bit.ly/ip-win7>. The team also suggests that users not rely on tech support, as the rocky transition from Vista to 7 will take a while.

The bottom line: The ultimate verdict on the new system is in the hands of the computer using public and has such the answers are not yet clear. Still, it appears to be a good start for the new Windows 7. 🍌

Partner on Deck



The iPirates wish to thank all those that make us successful. It is the support that is offered to us that allows us to compete, move forward and prepare for tomorrow. This month, the iPirates recognize Plastic Development Services. PDS was started in 1995 with one plastic injection molding machine and a vision to service the industry. Today, PDS has grown into a family-oriented business with several full- and part-time employees who are enthusiastic and dedicated to the success of their business. Employees pride themselves in the service and the commitment that they are able to provide to their customers.



PDS manufactures and sells the kickstand anti-sink pad. This special cradle design will protect a biker's investment and works with all makes and models, including road bikes, dirt bikes, and custom bikes. 🍌

Marketplace



The iPirates would cease to exist without the support from their wonderful partners. The team offers their gratitude for all that these businesses do for them.

		<p><i>Iceberg's One Hour Heating and Cooling</i></p>