

Principal Media Contact: DT Townsend  
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, LLC  
803.952.7566  
[dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov](mailto:dt-lawrence.townsend@srs.gov)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## North Augusta High School first year robotics team takes state championship

AIKEN, S.C. (Feb. 11, 2015) – The small “battle bot” races across the floor, snatching up the closest ball. It whirls around and speeds towards the closest goal for the first of many points during a fast-paced and exciting robotic competition developed for students from over 70 countries. For each team, this high tech contest follows months of preparation where the reward is not only successfully competing, but also learning many skills and life lessons.

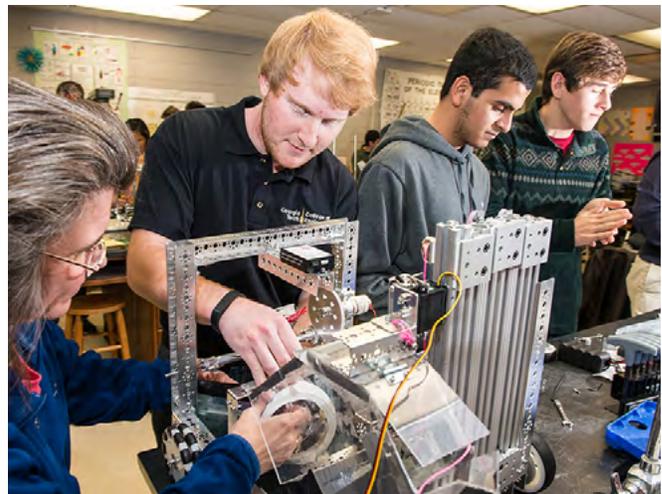
Several Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) employees, part of the SRNS Traveling Science and Math Demonstrations Program, have stepped forward to assist North Augusta High School (NAHS) teachers with forming the first ever NAHS robotics organization consisting of three teams, each with about 15 students.

The first competition for the NAHS Robotics teams recently took place, where their newly found talent and experience were tested at the South Carolina state competition.

The result of their first ever battle bot competition found one of their teams taking the title, qualifying the team for the super-regional competition, to be held March 11-13, in San Antonio, Texas. Teams advance from the four super-regional competitions to the world championship.

“To be honest, we were shocked,” said SRNS mechanical engineer and NAHS robotics mentor Annamarie MacMurray. “We looked forward to this competition as a wonderful opportunity to pick up some experience. I’m still amazed and so proud of all our teams.”

According to NAHS robotics founder and business teacher Jane Monroe, this all started when a meeting was held about five months ago to determine



*SRNS engineer Annamarie MacMurray provides guidance to North Augusta High School Robotics Team members Jonathan Grimm (left) and Ajay Heera. The team went on to take first place in the recent 2015 South Carolina State Competition during the first year of this new program.*

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the level of interest to form teams to compete in local, state, regional and national robotics competitions. This new program would involve designing, building and programming robots whose overall size is required to fit into an 18-inch cube. Once created, the mini-robots are then strategically operated against other teams in a highly competitive, enclosed environment.

Monroe has found that robotics is an outlet for kids who may not be interested in sports, playing music or the arts. But building, programming or operating a robot is something they are willing to work very hard at, sometimes up to 14 hours a week, for months.

As part of an unusual twist for an academic robotics program, Monroe has several students from her classes managing the business aspects of the organization. Typical duties require marketing, fundraising, accounting and coordinating the volunteer program. "My business students are not an add-on component to this team. They are valued, full-time members," said Monroe. "It's a highly synergistic relationship benefitting all involved."

Each team member has a primary role. Some are computer programmers, others builders. And, a few are drivers.

"Making and competing with robots is a lot more challenging than I thought," said Ajay Heera, 12th grade student at NAHS. "I believe all of this work and experience will also pay off in college or sometime during my career. I plan to become a mechanical engineer, and this hands-on experience has convinced me that this will be a good choice for me."

The annual FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) robotics competition is a not-for-profit organization devoted to helping young people, ages 6-18, discover and develop a passion for science, engineering, technology and math. Founded over 20 years ago, the 2013-2014 FIRST season attracted more than 300,000 youth and more than 120,000 mentors, coaches and volunteers.

## **Mentors**

Scott MacMurray  
Annamarie MacMurray  
Craig Pratt  
Thomas Wall  
Mark Farrar  
Kipp Neikirk

## **Teacher-Sponsors**

Jane Monroe  
Kathy Gambill  
Jomac Henderson

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions is a Fluor-led company whose members are Fluor Federal Services, Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, including the Savannah River National Laboratory, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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