



It's not about the robot

When I first starting paying attention to Team 781, the Kinetic Knights robotics team, like many other people, I thought it was all about building and driving a robot.

Since then, I have found that I was quite wrong - the team and program are about much more than that. Mentors work with a group of high school aged students, learning technical skills such as using power tools, operating milling machines, and programming, along with business skills such as marketing, project management, budgeting and fund-raising.

Team members help each other as they plan, design and build the robot, design websites, prepare press releases, set up a YouTube channel and organize events. They have also had to plan and organize the logistics of getting the team to and from competitions around the province, the US and the championships in St. Louis.

This team sponsored and helped set up junior robotics teams at the local elementary schools, helped set up a program at a high school in another town, participated in community events, and made presentations to various groups including numerous interviews with the media (on-line, radio, print and TV).

The FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) robotics organization has a value of 'gracious professionalism' and it was amazing to see it in action at competitions. When one team needed help with a part or a tool, other teams were quick to help out – apparently, one year there was a team whose robot was lost in shipping, so four other teams donated parts and time to help build a competition-ready robot in a single day.

Because teams actually compete in alliances of three teams each, meeting people, learning from each other and figuring out how to work together is critical to success

Awards are presented not only for technical design and good robot performance, but also for attention to safety, spirit, gracious professionalism, and the Chairman's award for taking a leadership role in their local communities, passionately encouraging interest in science and technology.

So during these past few years following Team 781, I have come to recognize that it really is not about the robot. It is about building a team, learning and working together, leadership, communications, and being, not the leaders of tomorrow, but the leaders of today.

Richard Yun

Proud Parent of a former Team781 member, and currently lead mentor

