# Ashburn Robotics Team Wins Spot at International Contest



*By Ethan George*

A robotics team from Ashburn won first place at the FIRST Tech Challenge Virginia State Championship, securing them a spot in the FIRST World Championship.

At the state contest on Feb. 2 in Hanover County, Team 11112, dubbed RoboLords, competed against a plethora of teams, including several others from Loudoun County. But the RoboLords were the only Loudoun-based team to advance to the international competition in Detroit in late April.

A nonprofit organized to challenge young minds, FIRST holds robotics competitions each year in which teams of middle school to high school aged students must work together and engineer a robot to solve a problem. This year's challenge was getting a robot to retrieve "minerals" from a crater and deposit as many as possible into a suspended container.

The RoboLords formed in 2016 with students from Eagle Ridge Middle School who came together to learn STEM and robotics through the FIRST program. Over the course of three years, the team learned how to design, build, and program a robot, and also picked up skills along the way to support their efforts, including team work, marketing, fundraising, and outreach.

The team members are: Isha Thukral, Sanjay Mohan, Rohit Prasanna, Akash Pamal, Ikhlaas Bhat, Aditya Kalkar, Advait Amdekar, Ananya Pamal, and Aryan Thukral.

While the tournament is fun, most on the team and Pamal Meyana, the team's coach, agree that the months spent building and preparing for a task that only lasts a few minutes is about much more than the robots.

"There are certain core values that come along with this program," Meyana said. "You respect everyone, and win or lose, in the end, you're still doing great things."

Other Loudoun-based teams that competed include Nothing But Treble, Absolute Zero, Slice of Pie, LCD, and Circuit Breakers.
Follow the RoboLords' progress at facebook.com/RoboLordsVA.

*Ethan George is a senior at Loudoun County High School interested in pursuing a career in journalism.*

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