

Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School
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PRESS RELEASE

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Assabet Valley FIRST Robotics Team Prepares for Latest Game Challenge

Area. Each year in January, Dean Kamen (renowned inventor of Segway fame) challenges high school students and volunteer mentors around the world to devise a robot that will satisfy certain criteria and perform certain functions. This year, the game involves a twenty-four inch exercise ball, a high goal and a low goal, a trestle, and soccer-style passing among three robots forming an alliance. It may sound easy, but this 120 pound remote-controlled robot has to be conceptualized, designed, built and tested in the next six weeks. Period. Assabet Valley Regional Technical High is celebrating their twentieth year of competing in the FIRST robotics program, and after a trip to WPI on Saturday, Jan 4th to hear what was in store for this year's challenge, members of the team met at the school on Sunday, January 5th, to start the brainstorming process and think about what needed to be prototyped. Volunteer mentors and students, including students from Marlborough High and AMSA, went back and forth, debating the pros and cons of a launching mechanism versus a herding mechanism, offense versus defense, tank drive versus outrigger wheels, etc. "Each year we let the students take the lead and come up with as many ideas for design and game strategies as they can, and then as a team we discuss all of them and begin to narrow the process down to something we can actually do, in-house, in just six weeks. Sometimes the ideas are fantastic, but with our limited scope of equipment and time, we have to be practical, too. Completing a robot that meets the criteria and can be competitive within the time frame is success in our eyes. What happens at the actual competitions is just the icing on the cake," explains Marcus Fletcher, the Project Leader. Fletcher has been with the AZTECS 157 team since 1997 when he was a sophomore at the school and on the coveted drive team. After graduating and going off to college in 1999, he has managed to come back each year as a mentor, and finally took the helm three

years ago. "I just want to give back. This school, and this program, did a lot for me and I want these kids to have the same opportunities I had," he adds.

Tagline: Mike Villani, Shrewsbury, Chris Gannon, Clinton, Carmen Wise, Shrewsbury, Gianna Ferrechia, Berlin, Jennifer Moore, Hudson, Patrick Hughes, Clinton, and Ava Rule, Marlborough, start brainstorming for the 2014 season of FIRST robotics at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High. It is the school's twentieth year of competing in the robotics challenge.