

Inspiring the young...

By Armando Lay

For the past 4 years I have been closely associated with the Leland High School Robotics team as a parent and as their mentor and I am very proud of these bright students and their accomplishments.

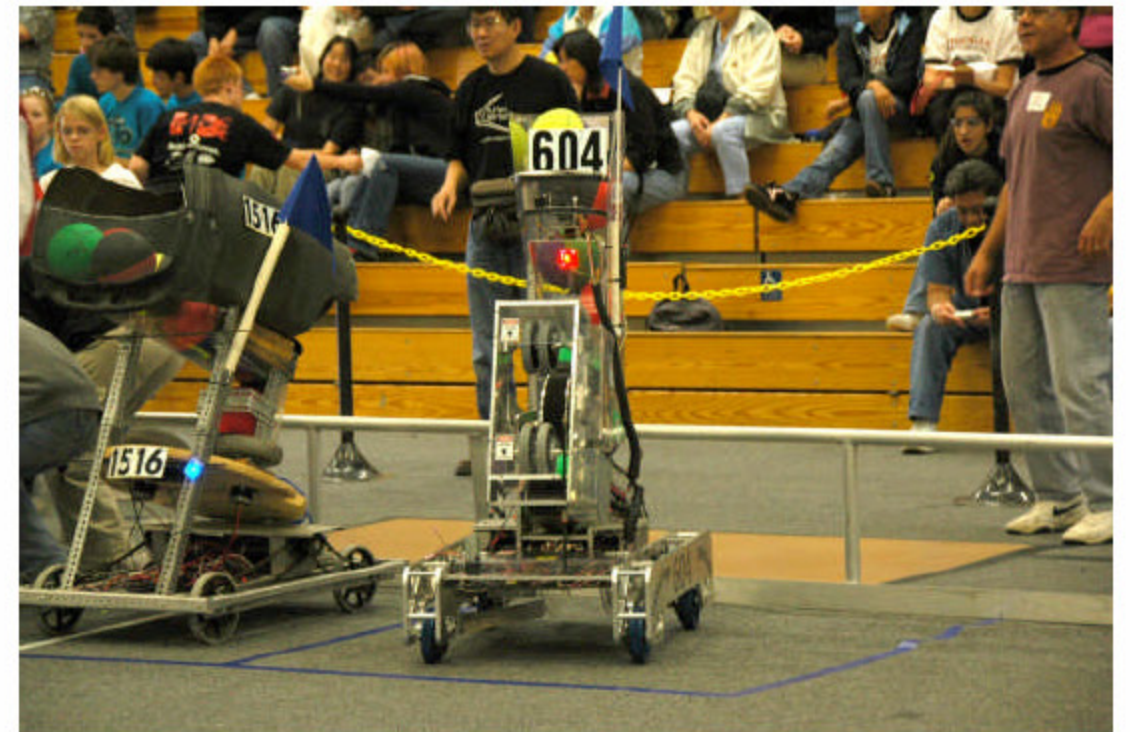
This team participates in a national program called the "FIRST Robotics Competition" (For Inspiration and Recognition in Science and Technology) which challenges teams of young people and their mentors to solve a common engineering problem in a six week period using a standard "kit of parts" consisting of motors, sensors and controls. They have to design their robots, do their own machining work, integrate the components into a system, and get their robot ready to be entered into regional and national competitions during a six week period.

As their mentor and sponsor I had the opportunity to help these students in several different ways. Aside from coaching them on how to use project planning tools such as Microsoft Project and participating in their practices and fundraisers, I worked closely with their teacher behind the scenes. One of my projects consisted in helping them outfit their new robotics laboratory. The team moved to a new room because they were previously working out of a temporary building that was so old it had to be condemned and demolished. The team needed lots of equipment and I reached out to the parents to donate some small hand tools, but the team still needed a bench drill press and a lathe. I contacted the San Jose City College and through their instructor, John Brudlund and the Dean Kathy Werle I was able to organize the donation of a Harrison horizontal lathe to the Leland High School Robotics team. Then I organized to have it moved by Captain Hook (Al Newman) a rigger who volunteered his time and equipment.

This robotics program at Leland High School has had tremendous influence in helping high school students aspire careers in engineering and Robotics under the leadership of their teacher Ms. Helen Arrington. Last year alone, we had two of our seniors in the robotics team admitted into MIT and my daughter Jennifer Lay decided to pursue studies in Robotics at the Worcester Polytechnic Institute.



L-R Caitlin Reyda, Jennifer Lay, Amy Qian. The Robotics program inspired these three young students to pursue studies in Engineering. Caitlin and Amy were admitted to MIT, Jennifer was admitted to the Worcester Polytechnic Institute and is planning to be a robotics engineer.



QuiXilver Leland High School's Robot No.604 participated in the FIRST Regional competition.



Ms. Helen Arrington students and Captain Hook (Al Newman), who donated his time to help move the lathe from the San Jose City College to the Leland High School's robotics laboratory.