



Lincoln-Way District 210

News Release

From: Taryn Atwell

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RE: Lincoln-Way Central students pilot Robotics Club with the help of local sponsor

Over the past six years during his time at both Lincoln-Way East and Lincoln-Way Central, science teacher Todd Drumheller's classroom has been buzzing with a group of students who have been meeting informally in order to tinker, build and program complex electronics. While science has been a typically male-dominated field, the push for a Robotics Club at Lincoln-Way Central initially came from two female students.

Drumheller initially heard about the SouthWorks robotics competition while taking a programming class in the summer of 2017. The competition was a perfect fit for his students' avid interest. "Having a competition to look forward to gives the student a goal to achieve and focus," he says. Beginning in the fall of 2017, Drumheller spoke with the interested students and Principal Dr. Steve Provis to begin the progress of creating the Robotics Club.

"Last year Julia Roessler, Jess Bowers, Ryan St. Clair and Brian Sterling wanted to create a formal Robotics Club. Julia and Jess were the leaders in putting together an all-girls engineering team," says Drumheller. Speaking with teachers from other schools who had already piloted a club, Drumheller researched the best approach to find sponsors for the group. "Illinois Tool Works (ITW) heard we needed a corporate sponsor and rose to the occasion," he says.

In January, the club met with ITW at Lincoln-Way Central for the first time. The involvement of ITW is both qualitative and quantitative. Employees of ITW offer both their time and their shop's resources to help the Lincoln-Way Central students, allowing the Robotics Club to utilize their expertise as a guide in designing and manufacturing a robot. The students will work with ITW throughout the process of creating a robot which will compete in the May 2018 contest with SouthWorks Robotics Organization.

"ITW has collaborated and partnered with us—just in time," says Drumheller. "Their experience in running projects and guidance has raised the excitement for all involved. The expertise Jeffrey Poling and Trevor Fishback have to offer raises the level of expectation significantly. The students seem to relish the challenge."

Formally, students in the club meet once a week in the Lincoln-Way Central science wing, but Drumheller says students are actually working "just about every day until 5:00 p.m." In May, the club members will compete with fifteen area schools when they "put their design to the test" in the SouthWorks competition. "It is humbling to see how quickly the members of the Lincoln-Way Central Robotics and Engineering Team learn programming, electronics and design skills," says Drumheller. "This is not easy stuff and they never shy away from the challenge."

Lincoln-Way Central Science Chair, Sarah Highfill, agrees. She's also excited to see growth of female interest in science. "Currently, girl power is on the rise," she says. "How fantastic for Lincoln-Way Central to represent itself with an all-girls team. Females have been in the background in science for many, many years, and for our Central girls to be motivated to do something different and unexpected of them...I say, 'You go girl!'"

