

**Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School**

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**PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**AZTECHS 157 Expands Outreach**

Since 1993, Assabet Valley has had a FIRST robotics team that must conceptualize, design, build, test, and learn to drive a 120 pound robot that performs intelligent tasks by remote control, all in six weeks. And they're good at it! With a few Regional Championships under their belt from previous years, last year the team earned the Judges award for "...the creative and effective use of the technology of the future, 3D printing," at a competition held at Bryant University in Rhode Island, and then brought home the Engineering Excellence Award from the event at WPI in Worcester. But the interest level in STEM and engineering has been so high that the team decided to take this to a year round level, and actually met several times throughout the summer as well as all through the fall. "Our graduating seniors were excited to stay involved, as junior mentors, throughout the summer, and our incoming freshmen had signed up at their Orientation Night in June, so we didn't want to lost that momentum," explained Marcus Fletcher, Project Manager for the program. "With the school still under construction, it was off limits to us, so we took the robot and lots of tools, and, thanks to the Hudson Fire Department, were able to meet several times in their community room. We even took the students to CADDEdge in Marlborough, where we were invited to use their training area to let one of our lead mentors, Randy Lennox, teach the incoming freshmen some basic 3D design skills using SolidWorks. They picked it up very quickly," he laughed.

Beyond building small robotics projects in pre-season, like a mechanical arm and turning a small motorized car into a remote control vehicle, the team began to expand their reach into the communities as well. Visits to several pre-schools with the robot were well-received over the summer, as was a demonstration at the Boston Children's Museum. Team members brought the robot to Marlborough's Heritage Fair, Northborough's Applefest, Assabet's Grand Re-opening in October, the Assabet at Solomon Pond Mall day in November, and

the school's Exhibit/Admissions Night in December. Additionally, they demonstrated at a Providence Bruin's game as part of the entertainment there, entertained the children at the Dana Farber Jimmy Fund holiday party, hosted a FIRST LEGO League competition, did a food drive at the Hudson Stop N Shop which gathered over a 1,000 pounds of food, and a Toys for Tots drive at the Hudson Wal-Mart. "We are trying to spread the word about how many fun careers there are in the STEM field by using the robotics program as a prime example. It also helps as a recruiting tool for Assabet as well, I think, because not every school is able to have a program like this. We have been very fortunate to have corporate sponsors who help us out, like Boston Scientific, EMC, Entwistle, Fastenerz, National Grid, Pepsi, Raytheon, Sorentos, Staples, and 3DSPD, and we certainly appreciate everything they do for us," added Fletcher.

Fletcher is living proof of how addictive the robotics program can be. A 1999 graduate of Assabet Valley, he was the robot driver for 3 years while a student, and volunteered every year after as a mentor until he was named Project Manager five years ago. To complete the circle, he was recently hired as a paraprofessional in the technical programs. "Initially I earned an Audio Engineering degree, but then decided to go back to school for a degree in Natural Science with a concentration in Secondary Education, with the ultimate goal being becoming a teacher at Assabet. And, of course, continuing to lead the FIRST program!"

Tagline:

Jennifer Moore, Hudson, and Marcus Fletcher chat with a youngster as he rides in the Aztech 157 remote-controlled car at the Dana Farber Jimmy Fund holiday party where the robotics team were part of the entertainment for the children and families there.