

# Extraordinary students



MIKE GREENER/CHRONICLE

Bozeman High School students Asher Smith, Graham Francis and Jake Teselle drill into the metal frame that their team sign will mount to Monday afternoon in anticipation of their upcoming robotics national competition in Spokane, Wash.

## Bozeman High School Robotics Team heads to regional competition

By JODI HAUSEN

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A robot in a plastic bag sat amid spare parts left over from its creation in the Bozeman High School Robotics Team's headquarters Monday afternoon.

Sealed against any modifications the students may deem to undertake between regional competitions, the basketball-heaving robot stood dormant as students fluttered about the so-called Bot Cave preparing for their second regional challenge this year.

Fifteen Bozeman students leave today to vie for robotic rewards in Spokane, Wash.

Now in its second year as a nonprofit organization, the Gallatin Valley Robotics Club provided a home for members of the high school's robotics team last year when it moved out of the school. The team had at one point

been relegated to a broom closet.

Mentor Mike Simmonds pledged to pay three year's rent for the 3,000-square-foot facility, which includes space for computer programming, construction and a metal-fabrication shop. White boards with copious notes line the walls throughout the South Rouse Avenue building.

"I saw that the kids needed more support than the school provided," said Simmonds, who is founder and vice president of Quantum Design – a California-based research-instrument producer. "But we're not trying to show up the high school. We're just trying to learn how to be designers and have fun."

The club met with success its first year out, being recognized as the rookie all-star team at a regional competition in Salt Lake City. That distinction made the team eligible to compete on the international level, where

it tied for third in an event in St. Louis.

At their most recent competition, judges recognized the team's robot for creative design.

Club president Colin Delaney and fellow high school senior Asher Smith don't mind calling themselves nerds. In fact, they seem proud of the designation. Both attribute plans to take their mechanical minds to the next level in college to their participation in the club.

"It's kind of changed my life," said Delaney, who will attend Montana State University next year. "The reason I'm going into engineering is because of this club," where he learned computer drafting and other skills.

Smith said he had wood-working experience from helping his father, who is a carpenter, but learning about metal fabrication and electronics "really helped

broaden my horizons."

He's also benefitted financially.

Smith is heading to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, where he will be 30 minutes from the Kennedy Space Center. First Robotics, the organization that coordinates the competitions, gave him a \$20,000 scholarship. Smith hopes to become an astronaut.

Stories like Smith's and Delaney's motivate Simmonds to continue to support the robotics program.

"Sometimes I'm just speechless," he said of the students' accomplishments. "Other times, I just wish they'd clean up after themselves."

To follow the team's progress and see video of its competitive endeavors, visit its page on Facebook at [facebook.com/thebotcave](http://facebook.com/thebotcave).

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