



Tennessee TECH

<https://www.tntech.edu>

<https://www.tntech.edu/engineering/news-events/news/2013-2014-coe-news/first-lego-league-tennessee-championship-tournament-coming-to-ttus-memorial-gym-dec-7>

FIRST LEGO League Tennessee Championship Tournament Coming to TTU's Memorial Gym Dec. 7

In a world that seems to be experiencing more extreme weather events, a group of children ages nine to 14 is experimenting with technology to address these problems.

Dec. 7, Tennessee Tech University will once again play host to FIRST LEGO League Tennessee Championship Tournament. The event will begin at 9 a.m. in Memorial Gym. This year's theme is Nature's Fury, and children will design and deploy robots that will take on tasks related to the aftermath of storms, earthquakes, tsunamis and other natural disasters.

"I've been involved with FIRST LEGO League since it first came to TTU," said basic engineering professor Ken Hunter. "We see it as an excellent way to get kids engaged and involved with the science, technology, engineering and math disciplines. It's a way of elevating the STEM studies to the same level as athletics for kids ages nine through 14."



The event draws hundreds of students and 64 teams from across eastern Tennessee.

The teams use a LEGO framework and LEGO Mindstorms® technology to build an autonomous robot that can carry out a prescribed set of tasks in two and a half minutes. Team members apply critical thinking and team-building skills, and learn to apply real-world math and science ideas.

"One of the most gratifying parts of the whole competition is seeing the teamwork in action," Hunter said. "You watch the kids' faces closely and you see them go from intense concentration to apprehension to exhilaration when things go right. It's great to watch."

The robots' tasks could equate to post-disaster priorities such as positioning evacuation signs, clearing an airport runway of debris, search-and-rescue or delivering supplies. First LEGO League consulted with groups such as the Red Cross, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service to come up with missions and challenges for this year's theme.

FIRST LEGO League sprang from Dean Kamen's For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology Foundation. Kamen invented the Segway, the gyroscope-controlled human transporter. In 1989, Kamen founded FIRST; 10 years later, First LEGO League came into being. In addition, FIRST has also spun off the FIRST Tech Challenge and FIRST Robotics Competition over the years.

"FIRST LEGO League brings in numerous faculty members and lots of student and professional volunteers," said Hunter. "The competition also includes an oral presentation on natural disasters, as well as judges looking at elements of teamwork and design and how well they were incorporated into a team's efforts."

Last edited 2014.10.15 by Davis, Cynthia.