

Robotics team sparks interest in STEM

By Zachary Pearlman

I have been a part of eight extracurricular activities during my time as a student at Durant High School, and I have grown the most in the robotics team known as the Mechanics.

The whole goal of the robotics club is to take on new, annual challenges that are meant to be solved creatively and compete against other high school teams in the area. However, I believe that there is more to the program than problem solving and friendly competition.

The Mecahnicats team is learning something vital: the uses of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, better known as STEM.

On top of this, the Mechanics teaches the soft skills found in adult working environments today.

While the T in STEM stands for technology, there is also a silent T for teamwork.

One of the fundamental parts of STEM and its courses is the teamwork and communication skills students can learn.

The Mechanicats are constantly collaborating with each other, finding new ways to improve not just our own individual work, but the work of teammates as well.

In addition to the Mechanicats, the team sponsor, math teacher Mr. Joey Kram-

er, also teaches a robotics class. Students in that class model many of the communication techniques the team uses. Students are seen walking around to other groups, asking them questions on how they solved the problem, and often finding stronger solutions than when they started.

Another important aspect of STEM is problem solving. People face problems daily; some of them are simple, and some are daunting or life changing.

When this soft skill is taught in STEM, people learn how to find different methods to work around—or through—these issues.

As our society advances, so does the importance of STEM. These subjects are grouped together for a reason because they are often used at the same time.

Science

It is the drive for our curiosity; if you have a question about how something works, science is what answers it.

One of the first questions I had as a child was about the night sky, “What are all these specks in the sky?”

This question still drives me to this day, however, for a different reason. While my question was answered by my parents, I found a great appreciation for outer space.

I am joining a physics program in college to learn more about the physical phe-

nomena of the cosmos. I have visited four different university campuses to see their STEM facilities and faculty.

Technology

We use it everyday; phones, laptops, and tablets are all devices people are almost required to use. I have not gone through a single high school class without using modern technology and really rely on my school iPad. Many Durant students even use their iPads to take online courses to advance their education.

Engineering

When I started visiting STEM facilities at different universities, my father joked that engineers were the ones who conducted trains.

However, engineering principles and work are all around us.

The buildings people live in, the cars they drive, and the thousands of planes that take off daily are all feats of engineering.

Most people don’t notice feats of engineering during their daily lives because it is meant to be hidden. Engineering is done right when everything runs smoothly.

Math

It is the underlying glue that holds STEM together. Each field uses math in one way or another.

Many say that the language of sci-



Photo by Zachary Pearlman
Sophomore Gavin Broussard makes adjustments to a class robot.

ence is math; it often unravels the world’s secrets. The foundation of computer science and technology is mathematics. Finally, engineering principles use math to predict how their inventions work.

All in all, STEM is everywhere, and the robotics team has given our students a taste of this integral and interrelated field.

Railroad From page 1

Recently, Miller has been working in locations such as Guttenberg and Bellevue, Iowa. At Guttenberg, he had to commute from the hotel to the job site, as the job site was an hour away from the hotel.

“As winter approaches, that doesn’t change our work,” said Miller. “We work in -50 degree weather, wind, snow, sleet, rain, doesn’t matter.”

Miller really enjoys his coworkers because “they are fun to be around, they’re

outgoing, and they help you when you need it.”

“The youngest is 18, and some of the older guys have been there for 35-40 years, so they’re probably in their 50’s or 60’s,” said Miller.

“I feel like I’m in a special place [Canadian Pacific] because it’s been around for so many years, and it has a lot of history, so I’m very proud to be in this workforce.”

Miller sees himself making a career

with the railroad.

“I anticipate being with Canadian Pacific, hopefully, for 30 plus years,” said Miller. “I definitely see myself there for a long time, being around people and doing something that has been around for hundreds of years.”

Miller sees himself returning to Durant in the future. His favorite part of being in Durant was being around friends, how welcoming the teachers were, and how easy-

Kennel From page 1

She said that when the COVID restrictions lessened, business was booming. To fit this demand, the Kroegers began hiring a team of employees to help out at Green Acres.

“I was leery at first but have been blessed with a wonderful team that cares about our guests here and loves to see them

happy,” she said.

The staff also helps out on the Kroegers’ farm, which is part of the property.

Schuett and Huston both said that they really do enjoy working for Mrs. Kroeger.

“She is really nice and is really flexible on scheduling,” said Huston.

Schuett also appreciates the flexible scheduling.

“She [Mrs. Kroeger] is wonderful; she genuinely cares about all of the animals that stay at Green Acres,” Schuett said. “She is a very thoughtful boss that is very easy to work with as well.”

For anyone that is interested in working at Green Acres, Mrs. Kroeger says to not hesitate to give her a call.

“If you are a dog or cat lover, interested in the veterinary field, or just want to enjoy your time at work and are interested in being a team member at Green Acres Dog Boarding Kennel, give me a call,” Mrs. Kro-



Photo contributed by Green Acres
Durant graduate Ella Mundt works at Green Acres Dog Boarding Kennel.

eger said.

“It is hard work at times, but the snuggles, kisses, and tails waggin’ are all worth it.”



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Junior Lauren Huston is a two-year crew member helping production of the school's plays. Her role is to tell people when to turn on the lights, what to put on the stage, and when to go out on stage. Her favorite part is "getting to know people and just having a good time."



Huston

going the community is.

Miller is currently in a long-distance relationship with fellow Durant graduate Karissa Hoon, who is attending North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City. Miller and Hoon both agree that being apart has not had any effect on their relationship.

“Technology helps, being able to talk to her on the phone and even texting,” said Miller.

“It does not matter because either way I would be at school, and he would be at work,” said Hoon, “so we wouldn’t be able to see each other anyway.”

Hoon says they still get to see each other on weekends and talk nightly on the phone.

While at Durant High School, Miller took almost every class that Industrial Technology teacher Mr. Tim Rouse offered.


“It made me realize I definitely wanted to be in a hands-on job versus in a desk,” Miller explained.

Intro to Ace was Miller’s favorite high school class because “we got to build what we wanted and got to do something in our interest.”

Mr. Rouse feels that Miller has “enormous potential” in several of the trades.

“Tevin has set himself up with a very large toolbox of skills throughout his time at Durant High School,” said Mr. Rouse, adding that Miller’s employer will be lucky to have him because his biggest asset is his work ethic.

“Tevin is a great example of college not being for everyone,” said Mr. Rouse. “There are amazing high-paying jobs available with limited training or on-the-job experience.”



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