

Soroptimist International of Somerset County Sponsors All-Girls Lego Robotics Team

Soroptimist International of Somerset County is participating in the Dream It, Be It program through Soroptimist International of the Americas. Dream It, Be It provides girls with access to professional role models, career education and resources to live their dreams. The topics covered include career opportunities, setting and achieving goals, overcoming obstacles to success and how to move forward after setbacks or failures. The organization had the opportunity to sponsor an all-girls Lego robotics team to give girls the opportunity to work together to achieve goals and at the same time learn new skills and have access to ideas on more non-traditional career opportunities for girls. Here's an update from their instructor, Tammy, on what they've accomplished so far.

"The Somerset Soroptimist Lego Team met for the first time back in November. The new members built a robot and programmed it to maneuver a simple maze. Although the maze was simple, it took a lot of trial and reprogramming to make their robot make all the precise turns. The following few weeks we built robots that used a number of different sensors to navigate. One sensor we used would know when it was approaching an object and make the robot turn.

"A few weeks ago, our playing field arrived. This is a large laminated mat with 18 possible field missions. A field mission is a task you can build and program your robot to do. This year's Lego Challenge theme is Hydrodynamics, so all the field missions have to do with water. Flushing a Lego toilet, flipping Lego manhole covers, and sending a Lego fire truck to another area on the mat are just a few examples of what the kids are programming their robots to do. Each mission comes with its own special difficulties to figure out the build and programming of the robot.

"We are looking forward to our competition at the end of February. Next we will need to link some of the field missions together. The robot will need to be programmed to move about to complete a few missions at a time, before returning to an allowed work area. This work area is where we can initiate preplanned design revisions to our robot to send out again to do other field missions. Once we send our robot out on to the playing field we do not want to touch it to avoid scoring penalties.

"The girls are learning so much about structural design, computer programming and working with each other. This is a wonderful educational opportunity that has many underlying benefits such as boosting self-confidence and the mindset that they can do anything they want to with a little hard work and help from friends. We thank the Soroptimists for this wonderful experience!"