

What happens when some good people get their heads together? They get things done, that's what! This past weekend FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Robotics team EnTech 281 traveled to North Charleston for the Palmetto Regional competition and brought home the most coveted awards; Dean's list finalist, Regional Winners, and Chairman's Award.

The 31 high school students and 11 adult mentors work year round on their program called FIRST. The team builds young minds and is inspiring the next generation of engineers, scientists, and technicians by immersing them in a program that not only builds a robot to take to competition but also does community service, outreach, and entrepreneurship. This is the team that built AJ the robot mascot for AJ Whittenberg Elementary school of engineering, helped dozens of boy and girl scouts earn robotics badges, volunteers at science centers and festivals, and holds summer camps. Even during their summer the team goes on field trips to engineering and educational facilities. Their appreciation for engineering and those people in those fields runs very deep. It is because of the all volunteer dedicated team of mentors that 100% of these youth move onto post secondary education with 70% in STEM(Science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. This team is building the leaders of tomorrow and were recognized as the best among over 42 teams from the east coast March 24.

Sam Bowen, a junior home schooler, who has been involved since the 3rd grade and is the captain of the programming subteam won Dean's List finalist. This award is given to two students at each regional competition who exemplify the spirit of FIRST robotics and stand out amongst their peers as a leader and future innovator. This is the third year in a row EnTech 281 has elevated one of their student members to this level, no other team in the world has represented this way.

The 120lb robot was built in just 6 weeks to drive around a field with barriers and shoot baskets. Ranked 23rd at the end of two days of qualifying rounds the team was selected by the number 2 seed. This winning alliance then lost only 1 match over the next seven to win the entire robot competition and come home as Winners of the Palmetto Regional 2012.

The most sought after award goes to the team that others should emulate, that represents FIRST to the highest level in every way. EnTech 281 has lived up to its mission and won Chairman's award. The team's nickname is the "GreenVillains", and the judges agreed that the team has set the highest of standards and reached them. The team's motto "Infiltrating Young Minds, One Robot at a Time" speaks how they approach their service work, outreach, teachings, and youth camps.

If it were not for their sponsors Michelin, Greenville Technical College, Greenville County Schools, Greenville Tech Charter, Caterpillar, jcpenny, Baldor, Laserflex, Gastroenterology Associates, ASME, 4H, and TWL Inc. this would not have been possible. Now the team has qualified for World Championships in St. Louis April 25-29 and they are asking the community for help. It will cost over \$10000. The team has plans to hold a couple of fundraisers but with the short time frame they have a lot of ground to make up. If you believe in their mission to educate and inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers then please consider making a tax deductible donation to:

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Thank you and if you have questions or would like to learn more go to www.entech281.com or contact Beth Leavitt, STEM Outreach Coordinator FIRST Robotics team EnTech 281 at bleavitt@greenville.k12.sc.us