Robotics team heads for international competition

Five Harford home-schoolers build bots

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Five innovative Harford County high school students who create robots, have their sights set on an international competition in Atlanta, Ga., next month.

"They realize how exciting it is," Marco Ciavolino, team coach and father of one team member, said of the competition where the team will build robots using a technology called VEX alongside other competitors who construct robots from Legos.

The team from Harford County, called Techbrick Robotics, consists of five home-schooled students from all over the county who meet at Ciavolino's home once a month to create and program robots.

Since Maryland does not have a VEX tournament, Vinnie Lasasso, Amy Ciavolino, Thomas Knickman, Gavin Phillips and Brady Townsend competed in a robotics competition in New Jersey, where they constructed a "ball stealing" robot which won the competition's innovation award.

"It's so cool what they do," Ciavolino said of the team's creations.

"It's unlike almost anything you can do that I can think of," Ciavolino said.

Team Techbrick Robotics will work side-by-side with 10,000 other competitors from all over the world in Atlanta next month, where they will participate is three different robotics tournaments.

'It's so cool what they do'
—MARCO CIAVOLINO

"They are going to meet and interact with kids their own age from 20 different countries," Ciavolino said of the trip scheduled for April 11.

The team faces the challenge of raising $6,000 to attend the Atlanta competition, and is still striving to meet the goal, Ciavolino said.

Those who want to donate to the students' trip can visit *www.techbrick.com*.

"We literally have had a very short time to come up with this money," Ciavolino said.

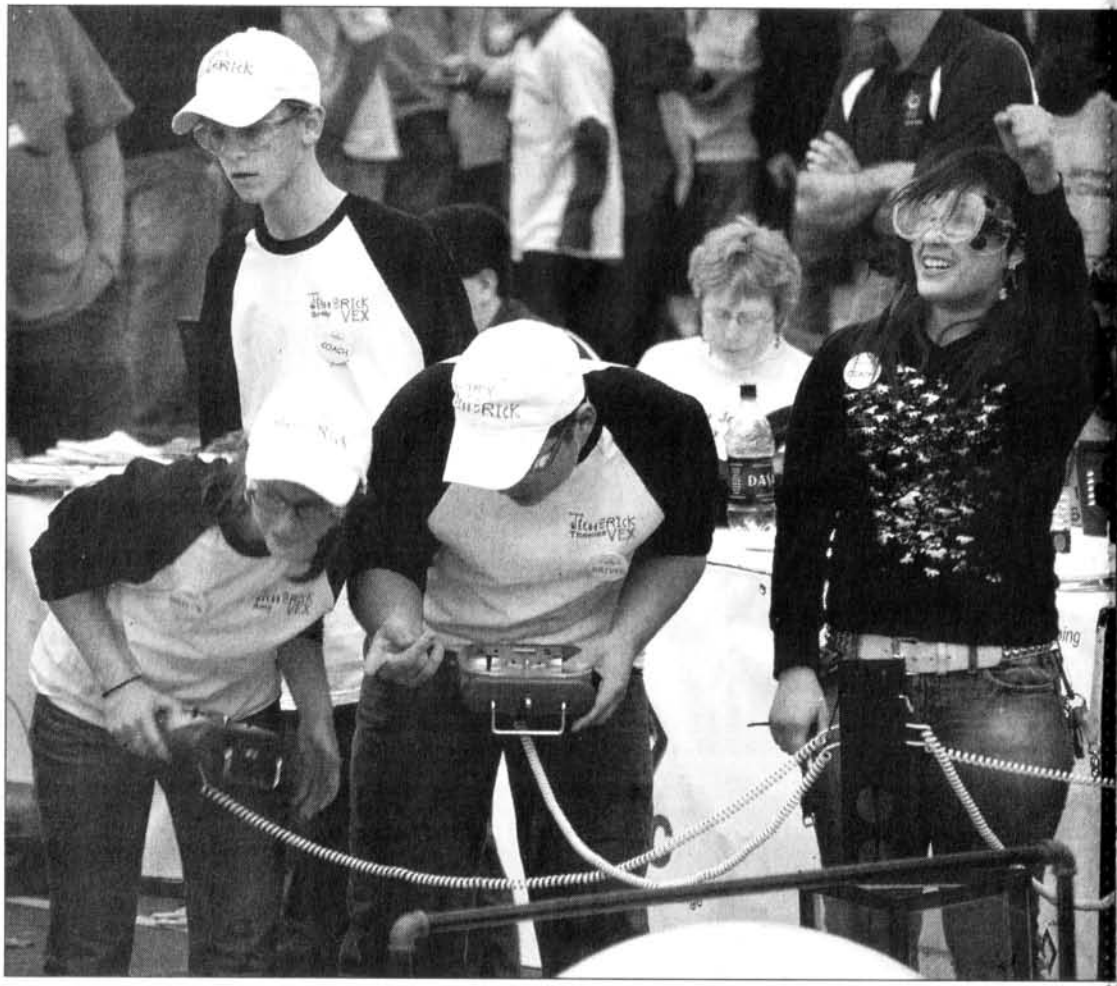

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARCO CIAVOLINO

TechBrick teammates Amy Ciavolino, left, Brady Townsend, back, and Thomas Knickman compete in the preliminary round at the recent New Jersey VEX Tournament.