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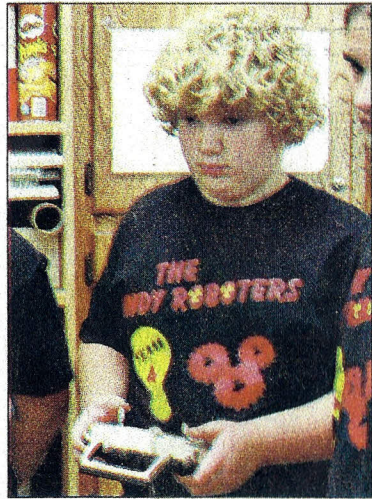
THE LAWTON CONSTITUTION

Indiahoma Roboters hope to take command in Arkansas competition

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INDIAHOMA — The robotics team at Indiahoma hopes to make a robotic splash on the national stage this weekend at the Frontier Trails BEST Championship in Fort Smith, Ark.

The IndyRoboters— made up mostly of sixth- and seventh-graders, with some high school-



ZEKE CAMPFIELD/STAFF

Zack Crow, a sixth-grader at Indiahoma, directs a robot via remote control during a practice run by the IndyRoboters robotics team. The 11-member team will participate in BEST Robotics nationals competition this weekend in Fort Smith, Ark.

ers tutoring — will be Southwest Oklahoma's lone representative at Friday and Saturday's competition, said the program's instructor.

"It's a culmination of 40 different students with 11 final team competitors, and it's just a great bunch of kids," said Stewart Wood. "The 11 members of the team are all very dedicated."

Tech skills put to test

For six weeks, the team has used applied technology — engineering, math, carpentry — to build a radio-controlled robot and prepare it for competition.

The kids built the 'bot using a kit provided by contest organizers, with parts like wood and PVC piping, and, during competition, they will manipulate the robot to perform certain functions, like collect tennis balls spread across the floor.

The idea, Wood said, is to acquaint the students with engineering and mechanics processes at a young age.

"You're given the problem at the kick-off, and then you have to build the robot with what they give you," he said. "They're learning about math, they're learning CAD (computer-animated drafting) skills, and manufacturing skills."

In addition to the robotics



ZEKE CAMPFIELD/STAFF

IndyRoboter sixth-grader Kasey Cook, left, and ninth-grader Jessica Kenney work to affix wheels to the bottom of their radio-controlled robot during preparation for this weekend's robotics competition.

game, the IndyRoberts will also be competing for the BEST Award, which is presented to the team that best embodies the concept of Boosting Engineering, Science and Technology. Elements in this competition include a project summary notebook, an oral presentation, a visual project display table and spirit and sportsmanship.

"They're going to have to go in and actually experience what it's like to go in and sell their product," Wood said.

Team gets strong support

Wood said Indiahoma could afford to get involved with the BEST program despite being a small district because of a 21st Century grant and the support of sponsors — CareerTech and

the Southwest Oklahoma Chapter of Bikers Against Child Abuse.

Sixth-grade team member Kasey Cook said smaller schools might actually have an advantage because of the cooperation and communication skills required.

"All of us know each other because we've been at this school together for quite a while," Cook said. "We pretty much all work together, we're all friends."

Wood said he is as excited about the coming competition as any of the kids.

"During competition they can ask us questions but we're not allowed to touch," he said. "Sometimes it can be very nerve-racking, but it's all done by the kids."