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## **Queen of Peace Robotics Team excels at FIRST Tech Challenge**

Queen of Peace High School *FIRST* Robotics Team excelled Dec. 13 at the *For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST)* Tech Challenge, winning the Motivate Award and making it to the semifinals.

The competition, held at Illinois Institute of Technology, was the first time that Peace women participated in a *FIRST* robotics competition.

“We had the best autonomous program of all the robots that day,” Assistant Principal for Technology Integration Barbara Smith said. “The students wrote the programs they used in RobotC language – a programming language they learned just in the past two months.”

The Motivate Award, one of five special recognitions given, celebrates the team who exemplifies the essence of the *FIRST* Tech Challenge competition through team spirit and enthusiasm. Members show their spirit through costumes and fun outfits, a team cheer or outstanding spirit and make a collective effort to make *FIRST* known throughout their school and community.

“*FIRST* Tech Challenge judges noted that the Peace team appeared at the school’s Open Houses, showed exceptional energy and teamwork, produced and uploaded a commercial for You Tube and was easy to spot at the competition in their bright green T-shirts,” Ms. Smith said.

Peace alumna and team mentor Donna Gailus was thrilled with how the team

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performed. Other mentors included Kelly Cox McCann '83 and Art Brauer.

“Our team of all women did a fantastic job,” said Ms. Gailus, a computer programming engineer. “It was fun to watch them step up into so many different roles. They served as programmers, the drive team, the hardware expert, the safety coach and the cheer coach. They all played a part in the competition and worked very well together as a team. I was so proud of them.”

In January, Peace Robotics Team members will begin building a new, more complex robot for the *FIRST* Robotics Competition in February.

In the fall Peace established the first all-women school-sponsored *FIRST* Robotics Club in Illinois, under the direction of science teacher Karen Amador. About 20 students are team members.

The 10 students to represent Peace at the Tech Challenge were: seniors Angela Amador (Hickory Hills), Tara Becker (Burbank); juniors Julia Amador and Michaela Strauch, (both of Hickory Hills), Rana Mazen-Abdellatif (Chicago, 55<sup>th</sup> and South Albany), Anna Dron (Summit); sophomore Dana Testa (Hometown); and frosh Mary Kate McKeown (Evergreen Park), Amber Vaughan (Justice) and Krystina Scott (Chicago, 81<sup>st</sup> and South Kenwood).

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