

Title of Session: FIRST Robotics

Moderator: Robyn Needel

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Room: FIRST Robotics Group (K-12)

KathieK: Hello Vic

VicSt: HEy

RobynN: actually I hadn't been looking....I was hoping our younger daughter would bite at the VISTA thing, she is a newlywed without a job

VicSt: Sorry I got here late

RobynN: Hi Vic

RobynN: we all just got here, you aren't too late

VicSt: oh, okay

KathieK: Are you involved already with FIRST, Vic?

VicSt: lol

VicSt: yes

RobynN: Kathie, I remember your husband, we talked at kickoff about RAGE

KathieK: Or would you like to learn more about it?

VicSt: on team 108..... in south Florida

RobynN: 108 or 180?

KathieK: Ah, you missed the storm then?

VicSt: 108

RobynN: ah....

VicSt: in fort Lauderdale

RobynN: nice place to live

VicSt: yeah

VicSt: for the most part

KathieK: I am formerly a mentor on FRC 173, RAGE, East Hartford, CT

KathieK: and now co-founder of NEMO

VicSt: awesome

RobynN: I am the NEMO for team 768 in Baltimore, Vic

KathieK: (You are a NEM, not a NEMO, LOL)

RobynN: you are right, of course

KathieK: common mistake, but it always makes me laugh.

KathieK: If either of you haven't seen it yet, the new website is up - www.firstnemo.org

RobynN: oh I haven't looked.

KathieK: we have a listing of the 2006 off-season events there, and all our white papers, and conference presentations, etc.

RobynN: I always laugh, too...because it's just easier to say NEMO

RobynN: cool...you and Jenny must have worked hard

RobynN: oh, Kathie, it's great looking

KathieK: Oh, yes, Jenny does a lot for the website (NOT!)

KathieK: She leaves the website stuff to me.

RobynN: I admire anyone who can do a website

KathieK: I wish I knew more, I am finding that my limited skills are not enough to compete in the marketplace any longer

KathieK: I am also in the middle of creating a blog for the Devil Duckie I adopted at Championships, Shane

RobynN: our oldest daughter can do a lot with websites, but she never taught me

KathieK: Vic, did you have any issues you'd like to discuss tonight?

RobynN: a Devil Duckie?

RobynN: where did you get that?

KathieK: The Devil Ducks were adopting them out

KathieK: Shane is a glow-in-the-dark Devil Duckie

KathieK: He goes to work with me at the College and has also been to Yale now.

KathieK: My son thinks I'm nuts, and he's right

RobynN: darn, I wish I had known...I'd have gone to find one

RobynN: nuts is good

KathieK: They were adjacent to the Vex fields so I had to see what all the fuss was about!

RobynN: we specialize in that in our family

KathieK: Vex pits not fields

RobynN: oh...we didn't get to the Vex pits

RobynN: next year...

RobynN: I would love to get a girls VEX team started at our school

KathieK: So... any comments about Atlanta for 2007? The dates are out now

VicSt: Does anyone have any information on holding and VEX/FVC regional? 108 wants to do one next year

RobynN: hmmm....hope Sergey Brin and Larry Page don't speak?

VicSt: but we are completely lost

KathieK: Send an e-mail to FIRST indicating an interest.

VicSt: what is the address?

KathieK: They are in the process of scheduling the regionals for next year right now I believe

RobynN: a good question, Vic. I don't know, but I'd be interested in finding out also

VicSt: okay, thanks

KathieK: Let me check for you - right now they are hiring the FVC Director and Engineer, Amanda Morrison was just hired as Program Coordinator

KathieK: and they should be getting details out very soon

RobynN: that's cool...I will have to tell Greg about Amanda, but then...he probably already knows

KathieK: crandall@usfirst.org - Cindy Randall would be a place to start. She could pass it along to the appropriate person

KathieK: I applied for that position but they wanted someone to relocate and not telecommute this year..

RobynN: that's too bad...

KathieK: I was very excited about the opportunity of getting involved again with Vex

RobynN: We have the Chesapeake FRC regional here and Anne Spence is behind the FLL regional...maybe she'd help us get a VEX regional started too

BjB: Hi, Vic. Are you one of Mrs. Chen's students?

KathieK: They are working on the game design right now - there is a thread on Chief Delphi looking for suggestions for this year's game.

RobynN: Kathie, what are you and Jenny going to do when the grant runs out?

KathieK: The FSM grant?

RobynN: yes

KathieK: I am not a FSM

KathieK: just a volunteer

RobynN: oh, I thought you were a Senior Mentor also

KathieK: and I'm not planning to be involved in FIRST at all this year, at least not at this point

RobynN: don't ever say "just a volunteer"....you should know better

KathieK: depending on job situation

JeffC joined the room.

KathieK: I am not sure about Jenny. It's sad that the program will be ending

RobynN: we are going through a transition at our school...got rid of a lousy principal who fought us all the way, and we're getting someone new who is from another tech h.s.

KathieK: Hello Jeff

JeffC: hi

RobynN: it does take a lot of time

RobynN: hi Jeff...long time no talk

KathieK: Jeff, are you with FIRST already?

JeffC nods

JeffC: Why did your principal fight you?

RobynN: I think FSM was a great program

JeffC: No... I'm not with FIRST, Kathie.

KathieK: I mean, affiliated, on a team

JeffC: maybe next year

KathieK: or new to FIRST

JeffC: yup

RobynN: well, Jeff...to put it in words I can type here, he thought he was the king of the school....and that wrestling is the most important thing. He was a terrible principal, over two years, more that 30% of the teachers went elsewhere

KathieK: yikes

KathieK: At our end of year FRC team feedback forum, school buy-in was a huge topic

KathieK: It's so hard to explain it to administrators who haven't been able to see it in action

RobynN: oh he pulled some ridiculous stuff...we are part engineering magnet, part standard school - for two years, he kept the magnet school money out of the hands of the magnet coordinator...the kids should have been going on tons of trips, job shadowing, etc.

RobynN: but he thought he could keep it, kill the magnet program and then use the money for his own programs....some of us trying to fight for money for the team found out about it and spread the word

KathieK: hopefully your new principal will "get it"

RobynN: he was demoted to a middle school that is currently in danger of being taken over by the state

JeffC: sounds like a good place for him

RobynN: from all we hear, the new principal is a seasoned veteran educator and will be a help

JeffC: cool

KathieK: Jeff, which FIRST program are you interested in?

JeffC: Is Vic one of your students Robyn?

RobynN: yup....you'd have loved it Jeff...we found a friendly newspaper reporter who's been writing great press for us...he refused to talk to her. She printed an article about his leaving, and made it sound like he was a first class fool

JeffC: I just hang out here Kathie... I might be interested in one in the Portland area next year... depends.

RobynN: no, Jeff...Vic is from Ft. Lauderdale

KathieK: Ah..

JeffC: sounds great Robyn... unfortunately in education, teachers aren't allowed to criticize the admin publicly.

JeffC: I did that once and got fired.

RobynN: this is true...and one reason my husband and I went all out to get this guy. As volunteers to the school, with no students in the system any more, we could talk to anyone - and we did

RobynN: if the principal told us not to come in to school anymore, he'd have looked like an idiot to the superintendent, to whom we wrote numerous emails

JeffC: Well... parents can criticize... *maybe*... but what usually happens is that you get labeled a complainer and no one listens to you anyway.

RobynN: and we were able to talk to the news reporters and people in charge, where our teacher mentor could not

KathieK: I hope it turns around for you next year

RobynN: I am sure it will...we had a good year despite all our hassles, so next year can only be better

KathieK: Vic, if you are interested in Vex I heard that some Radio Shacks have extended their sale on parts

RobynN: Jeff, I completely understand - when our kids were in school, I made it my business to volunteer

JeffC: Well... I'm trying to get a position at the local middle school for next year... running a computer lab.

JeffC: It pays about half of a teacher salary, but I don't really care at this point... in part because my son is going to go there.

RobynN: this is true, but they are running out, Kathie...we bought up a lot over the weekend, the store manager ordered it online and said when that stock is gone, that's all there is

KathieK: Yes, true.

RobynN: Jeff, that's a smart move, even though it will pay less

RobynN: and you could get a Lego League team started there

KathieK: Where are you located Jeff?

JeffC: Oregon

JeffC: if I'm there I might be able to get something going... assuming the FIRST site isn't filtered.

JeffC will have to check and see.

RobynN: I don't think it is

JeffC: They filter pretty much everything... wikipedia for instance.

RobynN: wow

KathieK: At our high school, my son could not access the FIRST site

RobynN: I can see filtering that....we found the way around our schools filter, btw

JeffC: that's another reason I want in... so I can start unlocking some sites and doing things with tech that need doing in the district but are completely ignored.

RobynN: at least at our school....the kids figured it out, they went to google and got in that way

JeffC: for example, all student computers are ghosted and completely revert upon reboot... as a result... there are *no bookmarks*.

RobynN: you know, the schools really need good tech people

JeffC: imagine what that does for K-4 teachers and students who want to use the web.

RobynN: oh, that sounds so stupid

JeffC: it's not so much tech people as tech and curriculum savvy people... people who actually spend time in the classroom and know what is needed and how to get things done.

RobynN: yes, I understand

JeffC: I'm presenting at NECC 2006 on Tapped In... the theme this year is "Online Professional Development"... <http://snurl.com/necc2006> is a link to my presentation. What kind of online collaboration and support is there for FIRST (besides their forum and this group)?

RobynN: well, there is Chief Delphi, www.chiefdelphi.com which was started a number of years ago by one of the teams...it has become THE place to go to read white papers, message with everyone in FIRST and keep current on what's happening

RobynN: and there is the Robot Chicks Union website and Yahoo Group, RCUFIRST

KathieK: I have to put in a plug for NEMO - the Non-Engineering Mentor Organization - we support adult mentors from any of the 4 FIRST programs, who deal with topics such as mentor recruitment and retention, fundraising, travel, etc.

KathieK: we just launched a website at www.firstnemo.org and have a private discussion forum on ChiefDelphi's website for members

RobynN: the Robot Chicks also have a forum on Chief Delphi...

KathieK: We host workshops as we are able, and publish white papers on these topics also

RobynN: sorry, Kathie, I forgot that fast...CRS disease is awful

JeffC: Kathie and/or Robyn, do you have a webpage with links to all the various support sites?

JeffC: or know of one somewhere?

KathieK: FIRST has some links on their site - some in the Volunteer section

KathieK: and some in the FRC team section

KathieK: we have some on our Resources page - www.firstnemo.org/resources.htm

RobynN: hmmm....I'd say join Chief Delphi and look around, there may be a master list somewhere

JeffC: cool... could you post that here Kathie?

JeffC: not me... I'm too lazy.

RobynN: lol

KathieK: post what exactly?

JeffC: that link you just mentioned at firstnemo

KathieK: Oh, the Resources page?

KathieK: NEMO is linked from this site on Tapped In

KathieK: How do I post something?

JeffC: right

JeffC: I was just thinking to post the link directly to the resources page.

JeffC: just click the "Links" link on the left of the top frame then add a link.

KathieK: I'd rather they come to the main page and explore a little...

JeffC: ok

KathieK: Vic or Robyn, are you attending any off-season events?

JeffC heads back to the main campus.

JeffC: Nice meeting you Kathie

JeffC waves

KathieK: Same,

RobynN: we were hoping to go to IRI, but only 2 kids can go, so we are dropping out

JeffC left the room.

KathieK: One of these days we'll get out there.

RobynN: I am really sad, cause we got in early enough to register

KathieK: We were supposed to take all the seniors last year as a special trip, but they all backed out except my son and one other student.

RobynN: argh

KathieK: And now the gas is so expensive we're not taking too many trips in the motorhome

KathieK: We're taking it to BattleCry at WPI so we can stay overnight in the parking lot (and bring our dogs) and we're having a tailgate breakfast for n.e.r.d. on Sat morning

RobynN: we are hoping to go to Duel on the Delaware, and a few others in the area

RobynN: WPI sounds like fun

KathieK: It usually is - actually more "competition" than "fun" for an off-season...

KathieK: Bash@theBeach in October is the "fun" one around here

RobynN: Greg will be there

KathieK: Oh good!

RobynN: when is the Bash?

KathieK: Oct 14 I think?

RobynN: hmm...wonder if we can get up there, I will have to check our schedule

KathieK: check the list of off-seasons, the date is on it, I know it's NOT Columbus Day Weekend like last year... www.firtnemo.org/calendar.htm

RobynN: I will check

KathieK: A bunch of us stayed in a campground nearby last year - we had fun even though it POURED all weekend

RobynN: I know we are following Mike Wade around and we want to take our kids to the Ra-Cha-Cha, since Greg will be back at school then

KathieK: They want to do a NEMO workshop at Rah-Cha-Cha

RobynN: oh, maybe I can help

RobynN: they are also planning to create a new VEX game

RobynN: from what Greg told me

KathieK: Doug Hitchcock asked about it -

KathieK: for RCC?

RobynN: yes

RobynN: yes

RobynN: sorry

KathieK: That will be fun. I think they are doing the same for BattleCry

RobynN: hmmm

KathieK: and possibly for River Rage

KathieK: Bash is Oct 14, I just checked

RobynN: that would be fun

KathieK: RAGE is also signed up to go to Ramp Riot

KathieK: I went with them last year to do a NEMO workshop

RobynN: we haven't signed up for anything yet

KathieK: I got them a great deal on a place to stay in 2004 and again last fall

KathieK: an apt. complex with townhouses that rent by the weekend, too

RobynN: I might want to check into that

KathieK: so the females shared one apt that had one HUGE bedroom (I think it slept 4 of them or more), one medium bedroom and one small one with twin beds. Full kitchen, dining room, washer/dryer, LR

KathieK: We got two apts for the guys

RobynN: wow, what a great way to go

KathieK: Yes, and much cheaper. Could have saved even more if we'd eaten in, and we brought food for snacks, etc., but went out to eat

KathieK: I always tried to book suites for the team - Staybridge Suites are great if you get the 2 bedroom ones - I think they have 2 baths, too and a sleep sofa

RobynN: do you have a link for the place? we'll be having a mentor's meeting next month, maybe I can convince everyone we have to go to Ramp Riot and do the same thing

KathieK: Also look at Corporate apts in the area. They come furnished and they'd rather rent them for the weekend than to let them go empty - we stay in NYC "inexpensively" that way

KathieK: I will have to check - I think I may have it on my work PC

RobynN: a good idea

RobynN: I appreciate it...I am printing out the list of off-season events

KathieK: One of the other mentors booked it last year so I may not have kept it.

KathieK: And another trick is to call. We just stayed in a hotel in upstate NY this weekend - online it was \$110 per night (formerly a Comfort Suites hotel so it had two beds and sleep sofa, mini frig and microwave)

KathieK: but when we called, they had a special for \$39 for the night

RobynN: I love doing things like that

KathieK: They have a casino nearby that has 4 hotels now and is taking all their business. It was very nice inside, at least as nice as the hotel in Atlanta that we paid so much for that came complete with ticks in the room and towel bars hanging from one screw!

VicSt left the room (signed off).

KathieK: Well, Robyn, I think we might be the only ones left tonight. I think I am going to sign off as well

RobynN: I have some work to do, so I guess it's a good time to say goodnight

BjB waves goodnight

RobynN: bye BJ

KathieK: Take care!

KathieK: bye BJ

RobynN: you too...I will be in touch about off season goodies