

Young East Islip Engineers Qualify at FIRST Lego League Challenge

Two terrific teams of young robotics engineers from East Islip competed in the FIRST Lego League Challenge, held over four days in January and February at Mineola High School. One team, dubbed the Lego Girls, consisted of the trio of John F. Kennedy Elementary School fourth graders Jayne Elliott, Sonali Kamath and Antonia Rezza (*pictured right*). Another five-person team included East Islip Middle School students Sachin Kamath, Mason Latino and Nicholas Selvaggio along with two students from other schools, Luke Bruzzo and Chris Sullivan (*pictured below*).

The East Islip teams were two of approximately 100 teams competing in this qualifying round. The competition consisted mainly of middle school teams and some elementary teams from across Long Island in the 9-14 age range, and entails showcasing proficiency in four topic areas, each given 25 percent weight. In Robot Performance, a robot built using Lego Technic pieces must be built and programmed for autonomous operation to complete a set of missions that have various point values, with the highest score winning. For Innovation Project, each team must research and present on a yearly challenge statement, defining the problem, finding a solution, prototyping the solution,



Photos courtesy of East Islip School District



sharing the solutions with experts in the industry and making improvements based on industry feedback. This year's theme was energy distribution, storage, production and usage. Robot Design challenged the students to showcase their knowledge in building a robot, attachments, sensors, block coding, documentation and a detailed understanding of mission strategy for the robot. Finally, in Core Values, each team is challenged to share how they've exhibited the competition's core values throughout the season.

The JFK rookie team of Lego Girls took home first place for the Robot Performance as well as their Core Values presentation at the January 21 qualifier. After a few years of competing and not qualifying, East Islip's middle school team also won first place for Robot Performance and their Core Values presentation at the January 22 qualifier. Both teams displayed their knowledge, growth and experience in coding, robot design, creativity and character throughout the many categories that they were judged in, and were presented with awards and congratulated by the judges and competing teams. They will both move on to compete in the FIRST Long Island championship on March 5.

"The level of accomplishment and pride these young engineers felt was tremendous," STEAM teacher Amy Elliott said. "They truly demonstrated that with teamwork and dedication, you can do whatever you put your mind to."