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Southern Star partners with DCPS robotics teams for second year in a row

By Bobbie Hayse Messenger-Inquirer Dec 12, 2019



Jonathan Leohr, engineering and computer science teacher at Apollo High School.

Alan Warren

For the second year, Southern Star Gas Pipeline will partner with the Foundation for Daviess County Public Schools in support of the robotics teams at Daviess County and Apollo high schools, and the

Owensboro Innovation Academy.

Through the partnership, Southern Star will not only be helping the teams financially, but employees will also be volunteering to help during competitions that each team will host. Also, last year, students were able to tour the Southern Star facility, including Apollo senior Sara Gootee.

Gootee said meeting with Southern Star employees "introduced us to community interactions we had not experienced and allowed us to explore possibilities and ideas we had never dreamed of."

"All of the volunteers at Southern Star have given us a glimpse of what we could accomplish if we continue to strive to do our best," she said. "As an art student, incorporating artwork into the engineering journals has provided a fresh outlook on art entirely, and working so closely with Southern Star last year allowed me to analyze what I hope to accomplish in the future."

Jonathan Leohr, who coaches both the Apollo and DCHS robotics teams, said one of the biggest challenges the teams face is finding enough volunteers for them to be able to host a robotics competition. Southern Star's support and their knowledgeable volunteers "is a tremendous help," he said.

Leohr also said for students to have the opportunity to visit Southern Star's facility is a valuable experience. During the visit, students demonstrated their robots and met with engineers at the company "to discuss future options not just with Southern Star but with engineering in general."

Karen Goedde, Southern Star Gas Pipeline's director of corporate communications and public relations, said the robotics teams at the schools have demonstrated leadership and engineering abilities that "set them apart" from other schools across the state and country.

"Southern Star and our employees are honored to be partners with both teams," Goedde said. "We are excited to see what they will accomplish during this upcoming competition season."

Vicki Quisenberry, director of the Foundation for DCPS, said Goedde reached out to her to see how Southern Star could get involved in helping to build an engineering culture in area schools. She talked with Leohr as well as the robotics coach for OIA, Stephanie Gray.

"Southern Star has been a tremendous community partner," Quisenberry said.

Gray also said Southern Star's partnership is valuable particularly when it comes to volunteers for competitions. It takes more than 30 volunteers to help host teams from across Kentucky during competition.

Apollo Robotics and Daviess County Robotics will compete in the Owensboro Innovation Academy Jingle Bot Rock on Saturday at Owensboro Middle School. Apollo will host the Eagle Nation Challenge 2020 on Feb. 15 at Apollo High School. The state competition is March 14, 2020, at Martha Layne Collins High School in Shelbyville. The World High School Robotics Championship will be on April 25, 2020.

Companies interested in funding and/or volunteering opportunities may contact Quisenberry at vickiq@foundationfordcps.org, or by calling 270-231-5583.

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