

To Houston and Back: Detroit Cristo Rey's Kinematic Wolves Build Lasting Memories along with Robots

DETROIT — For the 24 members of Detroit Cristo Rey High School's Kinematic Wolves 5577, attending the FIRST Championships in Houston was more than seeing how their robot would fare at the world's largest K-12 robotics event. It was about learning and growing and seeing themselves in a bigger world.

the five-day tournament in Houston. It would turn out to be a memorable trip on a number of fronts. Of the 24 team members, four had never traveled by airplane before. Three were middle schoolers. And six of them were seniors who



Drive team members Gael R., Joel L., and JeanCarlo B. waiting for a match on the Galileo Field.

such as 3D design and the iterative process of design, testing and refinement that robots undergo. They also attended seminars that would help them as young adults. That resonated with Xiomara O., who is graduating this year.



Drive Coach and mentor Ed Yazbec, Michelle I., Katia C., and Marcelo T.



Team photo of all participants surrounding the FIRST Logo outside the main entrance to the competition.

opted to miss their senior prom and the annual senior breakfast at the Detroit Athletic Club.

McGowan

“What the kids got out of this was life-changing,” said Detroit Cristo Rey science teacher and team coach Ann McGowan.

The Kinematic Wolves qualified for the finals by winning a coveted FIRST Impact Award at the Michigan championships in late April, the first Detroit team ever to do so. The school then had barely a week to coordinate travel logistics, sort out documentation and raise the more than \$60,000 needed to fly and house the team, as well as its coaches and mentors for

said the experience for the seniors was especially rewarding.

“It’s been their dream to do this since the sixth grade. To finally get there was the icing on their senior year,” she said.

The Kinematic Wolves quickly learned the competition, questions and judging was like nothing they had ever seen before. There were 600 teams from around the world, including Turkey, Israel, Canada and Mexico. On one day they witnessed a robot break a

record for the highest score ever achieved in competition.

“The energy of that place – even though it wasn’t our robot, we were able to see that in person. That was tremendous for our kids,” McGowan said.

In addition to robot competition, students had the opportunity to learn new skills in areas

“The highlight of my trip was attending conferences. I learned about LinkedIn, took notes on networking and

learned how to score an interview for a job,” she said. “Those things are necessary for somebody who is graduating and hopes to get a job in the future.”

Another senior, Marely C.H., had this to say: “The highlight of

my trip was interacting with the other Mexican teams in the competition and being able to connect with them without a language barrier.”

The trip to Houston was a first for the Kinematic Wolves, now in their eleventh year. Although they qualified to attend the FIRST Championship in 2021, the COVID pandemic turned it into a virtual event. McGowan said there’s no substitute for the experience students received by attending in person.

“Even though we didn’t win any awards, every single one of the kids wants to go back,” she said.



Michelle I., JeanCarlo B., Joel L. receiving a gift, including a \$400 tool and materials, from the Molex vendor.

De la oficina del Tesorero del Condado de Wayne, Eric R. Sabree



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