

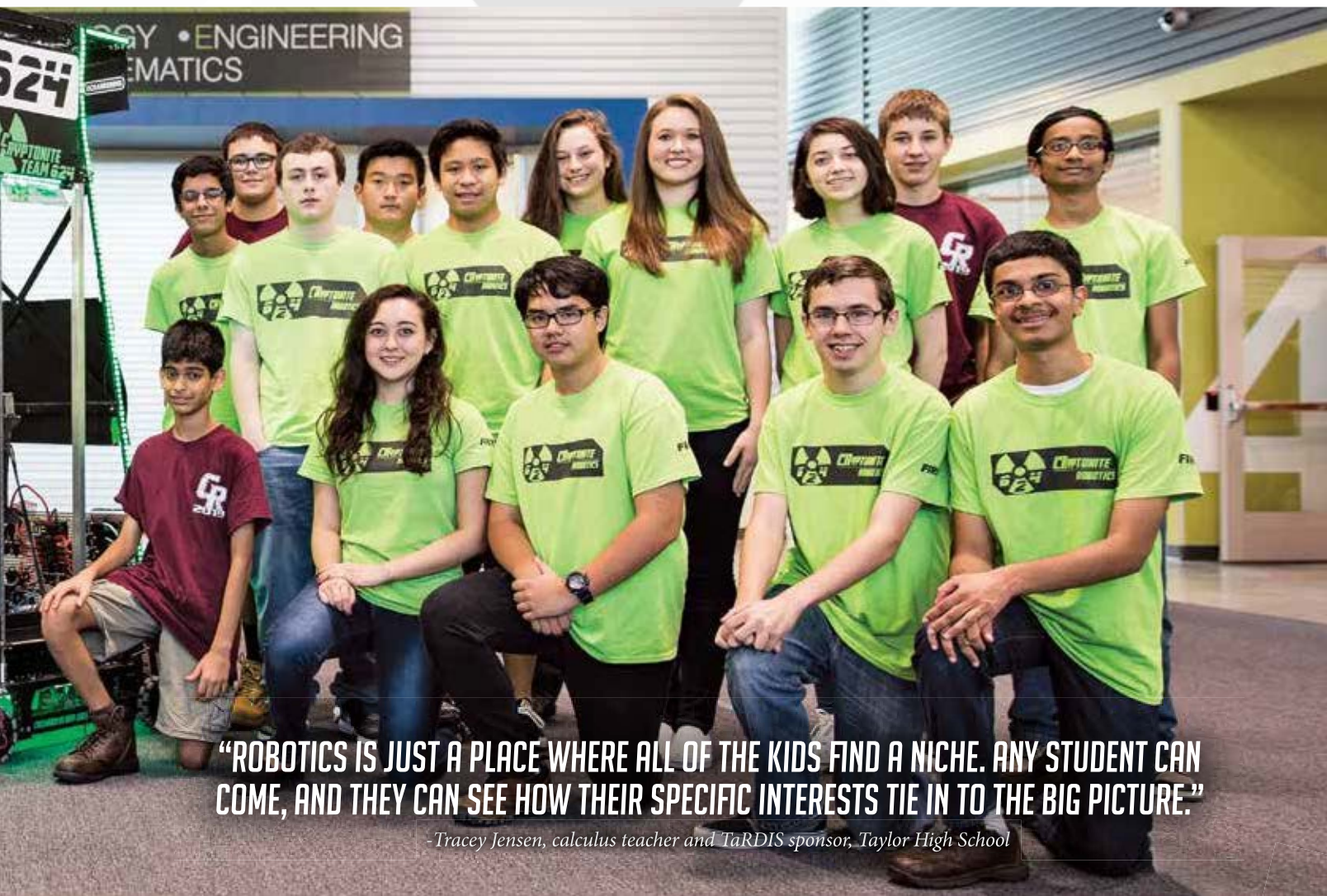


The Cinco Ranch High School CRYptonite Robotics team competed in the FIRST Robotics World Championships last year

ROBOTICS CLUBS IN KATY ISD

**HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS COMPETE IN TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES
ON NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STAGES**

Written by Tonya Ellis | Photography by Anetrius Wallace



“ROBOTICS IS JUST A PLACE WHERE ALL OF THE KIDS FIND A NICHE. ANY STUDENT CAN COME, AND THEY CAN SEE HOW THEIR SPECIFIC INTERESTS TIE IN TO THE BIG PICTURE.”

-Tracey Jensen, calculus teacher and TaRDIS sponsor, Taylor High School

Over the last decade, the nation has seen a surge in technological advances and science programs in schools. Several Katy ISD high school campuses have kept pace with this phenomenon by creating high-tech, engaging robotics clubs. Each week, students join to engineer, compete, and have fun.

“To me, building and competing is addictive. I get to have fun building a new robot each year, and I enjoy growing the new students’ interest in what I like doing,” says Conor Devlin, student president of the Tompkins High School Steel Talons.

STUDENT-LED TEAMS

Last year, the enthusiasm of the students and staff moved Cinco Ranch High School’s CRYptonite team beyond the energy corridor and on to the next level when they competed in the FIRST Robotics World Championship in St. Louis, Missouri.

“We like to think we are one of the top 10 student-led robotics teams in the world,” says team sponsor and Cinco

Ranch science teacher Dr. Jack Muskopf. “Last year was the best the students have ever done in club history in terms of winning regional [performance] and doing well in championships.” CRYptonite, which formed 10 years ago, won first place in their division in regional FIRST competitions in Dallas, Utah, and Houston, before competing in the world championships, where they placed fourth in their division. Approximately 600 teams from around the world competed in the event.

BUILDING THE ROBOTS

To prepare for competition, Katy ISD teams build and train at the district’s Robert R. Shaw Center for STEAM, near Rhodes Stadium. The mentors and sponsors are present to help and answer questions, but the robot-building process is student led.

“Like a well-oiled machine, each group learns, solves problems, and works together to make the overall team system run,” says Maria Sturzu, a member of the Taylor High TaRDIS team.

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The Seven Lakes High School RoboSpartans have opportunities to compete for scholarships and meet students from other parts of the country

BE A ROBO-ENGINEER

Any interested Katy ISD high schooler can join the robotics clubs. "I don't want to play up the geek card," says Rachel Anderson, an engineering teacher and sponsor of the Obra D. Tompkins High School Steel Talons robotics team. "You can be anything; a jock, a bookworm, or an outgoing person. We've got a little bit of everybody. Two of the guys who were on the homecoming court are on the team."

"Robotics is just a place where all of the kids find a niche. Any student can come, and they can see how their specific interests tie in to the big picture," adds Tracey Jensen, a calculus teacher and TaRDIS sponsor.

Many of the clubs are male dominated, but girls are actively recruited. Kaitlyn Foster, vice president of the Seven Lakes RoboSpartans, started robotics in elementary school. She joined the RoboSpartans two years ago, when she, her two siblings, and parents, both engineers, relocated from Atlanta. "I actually never thought I liked science. Then one day my coach said, 'You're doing science right now,'" she recalls. Through her membership on the RoboSpartans, Foster has written grants, given presentations to corporate sponsors, and planned community service events. "Ultimately I'm going to school for political science, and I'm going to go to law school," says the senior.

Whether they become engineers later in life or not, robotics clubs are a great way for students to explore a new career path, talents, and possibilities for the future. "I think it gives them a purpose. They don't want to just learn gear ratio on paper, they want to see gear ratio in action," says Anderson. KM



TONYA ELLIS enjoys writing feature articles and spending time with her family.



The Tompkins High School Steel Talons look forward to competing with other teams in the state

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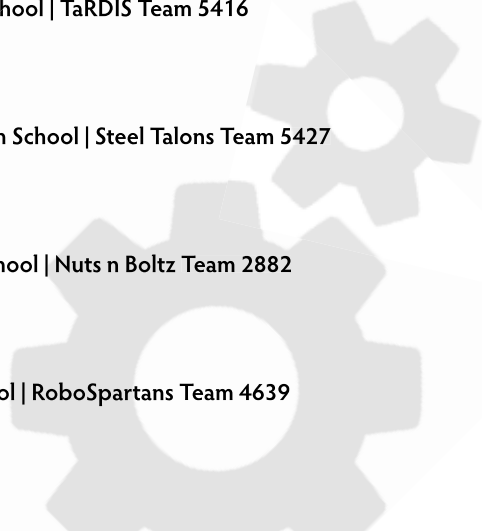
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The Taylor High School TaRDIS Team projects are student-led and built with the help of their sponsor

FACTS ABOUT KATY ISD ROBOTICS CLUBS

- 
Cinco Ranch High School | CRYptonite Robotics Team 624
 Ten years in existence
 85 team members (out of 120 applicants)
- 
James E. Taylor High School | TaRDIS Team 5416
 One year in existence
 45 members
- 
Obra D. Tompkins High School | Steel Talons Team 5427
 Two years in existence
 100 members
- 
Morton Ranch High School | Nuts n Boltz Team 2882
 Eight years in existence
 33 members
- 
Seven Lakes High School | RoboSpartans Team 4639
 Three years in existence
 55 members





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- Pastor Jeff Dietz



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- JAN. 3** LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR BY KNOWING HER NAME
LUKE 10:25-37
- JAN. 10** LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR BY RESPECTING HIM
LEVITICUS 19:9-18
- JAN. 17** LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR WHO IS HARD TO LOVE
MATTHEW 5:43-48
- JAN. 24** LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR BY LOVING YOURSELF
MARK 10:28-31
- JAN. 31** LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR BY SHARING YOUR FAITH
1 PETER 3:15
- FEB. 7** TESTIMONY SUNDAY

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- Pastor Jeff

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