

## **KVH Staff Judge FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition**

While most of Roger Williams University students were sound asleep on Saturday, January 12, an army of children and their robots marched into the campus athletic center to join a smaller army of technical judges, including Cory Bousquet and Chris Watson from KVH. Specifications had already been met. Problems were identified. Solutions were hatched. Software commands were programmed. Robots were born. It was time to solve the environmental problems faced by this new generation once and for all. Don't be too surprised; these aren't your average kids. They're the FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition participants, and they worked hard to get there.

Under the guidance of mentors, each of the dozens of teams chose an environmental problem and proposed how to solve it. The issues they tackled were as encompassing as global warming and as specific as reducing the amount of salt used on winter roads. Many teams directly contacted experts on these issues. One team even fielded calls on a local radio program to raise environmental awareness. On competition day, some even presented several binders of collected data to panels of judges wearing homemade costumes and performing rehearsed skits to teams of presentation and research judges like KVH's Jim Dyson and Chris Watson. Each team's body of work was evaluated on a number of levels by several panels of judges with technical expertise. Not even the robots were safe; panels of engineers, including KVH's own Cory Bousquet, evaluated the design of the robots made by each team.

"When I was a kid, LEGOs were my favorite toy and one of the major influences in my decision to become an engineer, which is why I wanted to help out with the tournament," Cory explains. "The highlight of the competition for me was watching how excited the kids got when their designs succeeded in completing the challenges. It was incredible to see how much creativity and hard work the kids (some as young as third grade!) put into their robot designs."

All the while, the athletic center's stands filled with onlookers. They carefully watched the big screens during the most exciting part of the competition. Several tables with special obstacle courses stood in a row, surrounded by judges and cheering teammates. The robots that were made from hours of programming and design were unleashed at the blow of a whistle. These robots, made of Lego blocks and motors, raced to perform a number of tasks representing environmental solutions, like saving polar bears, reducing energy consumption, and rebuilding levees. These weren't remote controlled robots, mind you, they were programmed!

Check out a video of the competition [here](#), or click [here](#) to find out more about the FIRST LEGO League.

It's comforting to know that the FIRST LEGO League Robotics Competition is there to help generate the awareness, enthusiasm, and the skills necessary to prepare them for future challenges. Special thanks to KVH's own FIRST LEGO League judges, Cory Bousquet, Jim Dyson, and Chris Watson, for helping to make this possible this year!



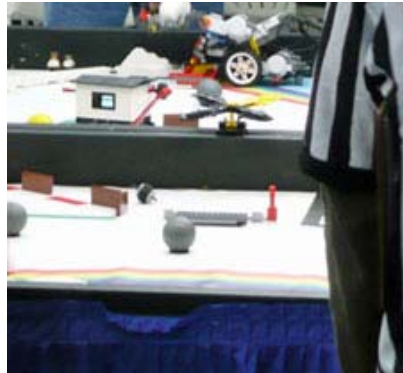
*Mentors and family members provided plenty of support for the students*



*The view of the battle from the judges' chambers*



*Time's up! The polar bear is safe and points are tallied*



*A robot carries its load and navigates obstacles*