

# Statesman

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## Competition earns Chap Robotics team more awards, competitors' appreciation

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“How big?” “So big!” Is a chant that anyone associated with the Chap Robotics program holds near and dear to their hearts. It symbolizes team spirit, pride and the alliance formed with the countless hours of work put into making a robot that the world of robotics finds pride in.

In my four years of school at Westlake High School, I have been involved in many competitive organizations. However, none of which have brought me so much pride in myself, my team the name and numbers worn with honor on my back. Team 2468, Appreciate is worlds different than any organization that I have prided myself in being a part of. It is an organization with core values set in helping others to succeed, being the best that we can be and supporting our peers. Yes, we also build robots that compete in what George Bush called “The WWE for nerds,” but the core of Team Appreciate is just that, appreciation.

The Chap Robotics team, 2468 Appreciate competed in the For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology Alamo Regional Feb 27-March 1 in San Antonio. FIRST is a worldwide robotics competition centered around gracious professionalism and innovation for students of all ages. Three competitions fall under the FIRST umbrella including, FIRST Lego League, for elementary kids, FIRST Tech Challenge for middle-schoolers and freshmen and sophomores and finally FIRST Robotics Competition for all high school participants. Team Appreciate competed in FRC, placing second overall

and taking home the illustrious entrepreneurship award for not only the impressive business plan, but also for their patent-pending invention the ChapR remote, used for controlling FTC robots in competition.

The FRC challenge this season is called Arial Assist. It requires robots to be able to maneuver around an arena, while shooting large balls into goals, or over trusses. Teams are grouped into alliances of three robots that combine their engineered skills to perform to the best of their ability. The contest is organized into a series of matches that funnel into a double elimination tournament for a final alliance winner.

Team Appreciate's robot is named this year for RexStrong, a charity supporting a Westlake area child with stage four cancer. The robot did Rex proud last weekend ranking high in the leaderboards, and achieving other trophies and medals as well. But more than just the awards, the Chap Robotics Team left a legacy at the Alamo Regional by helping countless teams perfect their robots on sight. Each team is provided a workspace at the contest called a "pit," These spaces are used for fixing, or finishing robots as well as showcasing to judges the hard work and determination that was incorporated into every circuit, wire and design that the robot holds. However, the spirit of FIRST was exemplified within Team Appreciate in more ways than just their robot. At any given time of the eight-hour day, one could find a WHS student in another team's pit offering any assistance that they could, from programming to building new parts. One team lovingly named a part of their robot after the Chap that was helping them to succeed to the best of their ability. The team, Tex-spllosion ended up allying with WHS in the final round finishing second overall. Teams definitely appreciated the help, and many approached the Chap Robotics pit to personally thank them.

Though every match is much more exciting than a newbie to the robotics world like me could possibly imagine, finals was indeed a league of its own. It felt like the final quarter of the Super Bowl, but instead of rooting for our favorite team, we're so personally invested that we couldn't bare sit down for hours, for fear of missing one

moment of what was happening. The final rounds flew by in a haste of robot-fixes and exasperating matches. Team Appreciate, allied with Tex-Spllosion, and the two time World Champions RoboWranglers faced off against the top eight alliances in a best-two-of-three situation. The final match came down to the RoboNauts, Cryptonite and the Falcons versus the Chap alliance in an infinitely close few matches. The final score eventually came from close referee calls due to safety penalties and arena malfunctions. Though Team Appreciate failed to qualify for World Championships at the Alamo Regional, the team will travel to Lubbock and Louisiana coveting the illusive first-place medal and trip to St. Louis Championships.

The team can also qualify by winning the Chairman's Award, which is an impressive title given to a team dedicated to outreach, in that they will spread the message of FIRST, and promote the relevancy and basic fun involved in robotics, science and technology. The team writes a 10,000 character essay outlying their participation in outreach, their business plan, sponsors, mentors, coach and basic structure of their team. The team also creates a short video showcasing their robot and how FIRST has impacted their lives. WHS will be presenting their Chairman's award presentation at the next two regionals.

WHS also is the two-time winner of one of the most prestigious awards given at FIRST. The Woody Flowers award is given to a mentor or coach that inspires their students with science and technology, while also creating an environment of creativity and innovation. Last year, this award was presented to WHS Coach Norman Morgan. This year, his successor was also a Team Appreciate mentor, Scott McMahon. This honor is given due to a student recommendation essay placed forward in the honor of a mentor of their choice. Chap Robotics was thrilled to receive this award two years in a row.

I joined Team Appreciate to help with awards essays and videos on a volunteer basis. However, I found myself falling in love with the spirit of Team Appreciate. Their love for each other, what they stand for and

their program is contagious. Chap Robotics is like nothing that I have encountered before in high school, and I anxiously await the next successes that are sure to come about for this impressive team.

How Big? So big.