

Building for the future

DEP engineers take time to help local high school science students construct robot

By Tom Aluise

It's a little different from coaching youth sports, leading a pack of Scouts or counseling teenagers at summer camp.

Then again, three DEP engineers who are lending their expertise to a group of brainy high school students in their quest to build a functional robot for competition, will tell you it's really about the same things:

Helping kids, teaching a few life lessons along the way, and perhaps influencing a career choice.

"I enjoy doing it. I enjoy working with the kids," said Neil Chakrabarty, who works in the DEP's Information Technology Office. "Robotics has been an interest of mine for a long time. That's part of why I'm involved."



Division of Air Quality engineer Mike Rowe works with Charleston Catholic High School students on their robot project in the Coopers Rock Training Room. The team took its robot to regional competition on Jan. 14 in Cleveland, Ohio.

"A lot of this is making them think about how to problem solve," said the Division of Air Quality's Mike Rowe. "If they come up with an idea, I usually ask them to explain what's good about it and what the potential problems are."

"Everybody has to learn how to break down problems into manageable pieces and work as a team. They're learning how to work together."

Back in September, Chakrabarty, Rowe and the DAQ's Laura Crowder became mentors to the Charleston Catholic High School FIRST robotics team, called the "Prototype Posse." The team is

See **FUTURE**, Page 10

[Click for video of robot in action](#)



DAQ engineer Laura Crowder and ITO engineer Neil Chakrabarty have been involved with Charleston Catholic's robotics team for three years.

DEP joins efforts with Appalachian Power

By Tom Aluise

Greg Adolfsen didn't have much trouble convincing officials from Appalachian Power Co. that joining forces with the Department of Environmental Protection to educate the public about energy efficiency was a good idea.

"We're very happy to partner with DEP and look forward to

working together to increase awareness of our energy efficiency programs," said Jim Fawcett, manager of Energy Efficiency and Consumer Programs for Appalachian Power. "We realized our goals aligned and we saw the opportunity to work together."

Adolfsen, the DEP's Sustainability officer, helped broker a Memorandum of

Understanding between the DEP and Appalachian Power.

The MOU, which runs through December 2013, outlines how the DEP and Appalachian Power will work collaboratively to inform the public about the environmental benefits of energy efficiency programs. This past spring, Appalachian Power launched a

See **POWER**, Page 8

Water quality always on his mind

Jeff Parsons joined the Division of Mining and Reclamation as a permit writer and reviewer in August 2004.

Today, he heads up the division's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program, which issues water pollution control permits. Parsons also oversees the DMR's Underground Injection Control and 401 Water Quality Certification programs.



Parsons

A native of Sissonville, Parsons and his wife of 28 years live in Kanawha City.

1. How is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's increased oversight in the mining NPDES permitting process affecting your job?

It has really increased the workload tremendously, just due to the oversight and comments we receive



With Jeff Parsons

from the EPA. We have made changes to our permitting program through this review process and have added different conditions to permits. We now have Whole Effluent Toxicity (WET) testing and biological monitoring on certain permits and certain types of outlets.

2. How have you kept your staff up to speed on the changing and uncertain nature of the NPDES permitting process?

We're continuously training our permit writers in the regional offices. We've had multiple training sessions where we have brought the permit writers and supervisors in for specific issues. Two separate training sessions involved the

EPA. Additionally, to keep up with the rapid changes, we started doing a weekly video conference with the permit writers in the regional offices. This has been in place for almost a year now. During the video conference, issues are addressed first and then we open the session up to the staff to ask questions and make comments or suggestions. It's been a really effective way to keep the staff moving with these ever-changing conditions.

3. How is the coal industry reacting to the EPA's enhanced review process and are you receiving much of a backlash?

As far as backlash, I really haven't received anything. The industry has been really good to work with through this. I'm sure they're not happy about it, but they ask a lot of questions and they're always looking at new ways to do things to meet the different conditions we're requiring in permits. Most permittees are

being proactive in their approaches, especially in new permits and the mining techniques they're proposing.

4. How much deference is the EPA giving to the permitting guidance document the DEP released in August of 2010 to help in the development of NPDES permits for mining?

For the most part, the EPA has received it well. To address the EPA's concerns as to how we address the narrative standards in mining NPDES permits, biological monitoring and WET testing are now requirements in many permits we issue.

5. Through a consent decree, the DEP is required to issue NPDES permits to more than 150 special reclamation sites around the state by 2015. What challenges is that presenting for you?

That's been a difficult challenge, just due to

See WATER, Page 5

Project WET perfect fit for excited coordinator

By Colleen O'Neill

"Project WET and I, we are made for each other."

That's the sentiment of Kim Maxwell, the new Project WET coordinator for the Department of Environmental Protection.

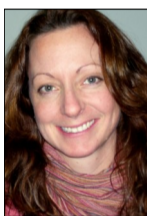
Maxwell works out of the agency's Oak Hill office and replaces Rose Long, who was the state's Project WET coordinator since the program's inception 16 years ago.

Long retired in December and Maxwell stepped right in.

Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) focuses on educating students and their teachers about water issues, which is right up Maxwell's alley.

"My passion lies in environmental education," she said.

Maxwell said she has



Maxwell

strong feelings about cultivating the children's excitement and their love of learning about the natural world.

"I have small

children and have been a teacher. I want to run with their curiosity and excitement, make learning fun, and teach children to be responsible stewards of this world."

Maxwell realizes she's filling big shoes in replacing Long.

"The first time I attended a Project WET workshop with Rose Long, I thought 'Oh wow, she's amazing,'" Maxwell said. "Never did I

See FIT, Page 8



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The Year in Pictures

A look back at DEP happenings from 2011



Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day volunteers and participants share a group photo with the day's special guest, Mountaineer Brock Burwell. The Mountaineer posed for individual pictures with the kids as well.



Keith Carte, from the Office of Explosives and Blasting, lends a hand to some canoers during Junior Conservation Camp at Cedar Lakes in Ripley.



DAQ Director John Benedict talks about the federal National Clean Diesel Campaign, which helped fund a fleet of new, cleaner school buses in Greenbrier County.

Scott Norman, from the Solid Waste Management Board, delivers a pitch during the Corporate Cup softball tournament. The DEP CC Team captured its 10th consecutive Corporate Cup championship in 2011.



**More photos
on next page**

The year in pictures ... continued



Earth Day coordinator Travis Cooper interacts with participants during the DEP's annual Earth Day activities at the Clay Center in Charleston.



Rusty Joins, of the DEP's Homeland Security and Emergency Response unit, stands out among the crowd during the DEP's Youth Environmental Day at North Bend State Park in Ritchie County.



The DEP's Doug Hammell (front) and Pat Burch pick up trash near DEP headquarters during an Adopt-A-Highway litter sweep.



Three e-cycling events co-sponsored this year by the DEP yielded more than 50 tons of electronic waste.



REAP's Lisa Facemyer displays the day's trash collected at the Great Kanawha River Cleanup near Charleston's Magic Island.



Working for the DEP's Pollution Prevention and Open Dump Program, Chris Cartwright happened upon these two mix-breed puppies in an open dump in South Charleston.



Gene Smith (middle) and Rick Campbell (right), from the Office of Oil and Gas, take part in last year’s DEP Day at the Legislature.

Day at Legislature scheduled Feb. 15

■ *Area high school students are invited to participate*



By Tom Aluise

The Department of Environmental Protection will be reaching out to more than just state lawmakers at this year’s DEP Day at the Legislature.

Event Coordinator Annette Hoskins said the agency decided to invite area high school students to the Feb. 15 event, set for the Upper Rotunda at the West Virginia State Capitol.

“As we all know, DEP Day at the Legislature is intended to help inform the Legislature on what the DEP does on a daily basis,” said Hoskins, who works in the agency’s Public Information Office.

“However, we don’t always get to see a large number of legislators, so I thought it would be beneficial to invite high school students from the surrounding counties to see what the DEP does as well.

“This way, we are getting our word out to the Legislature, citizens visiting the capitol, and the high school students and faculty who are able to come.”

Hoskins sent a flyer to 36 high schools from 12 counties informing them

about DEP Day at the Legislature.

“In the flyer, I included information about the Governor’s Internship Program, along with information about the DEP offices, for career choice options,” Hoskins said.

Last year, several DEP offices, divisions and programs participated in the day at the capitol, including:

- Abandoned Mine Lands; Special Reclamation; Division of Mining and Reclamation; Office of Explosives and Blasting; REAP (Rehabilitation Environmental Action Plan); Division of Water and Waste Management; Office of Oil and Gas; Public Information Office; Human Resources; Environmental Enforcement; Project WET; Office of Environmental Advocate; Youth Environmental Program; Division of Air Quality; and the Solid Waste Management Board.

For more information about DEP Day at the Legislature, contact Hoskins at 926-0499, ext. 1659, or: Annette.L.Hoskins@wv.gov.

WATER

Continued from Page 2

the fact that there’s nothing to go by. This has never been done in the U.S and West Virginia is the first state to be required to permit these types of facilities. What really makes this difficult is, typically when you get an NPDES permit, you design the treatment facility for the specific discharge, get your permit, build the facility, then you create the discharge. These discharges are out there, they’re existing. The new permits contain quality-based effluent limitations. One major issue is that the majority of these facilities weren’t designed to meet these stringent water quality-based effluent limitations; they were only designed to meet technology-based requirements, as many of these are older facilities. Due to the inadequate treatment facilities, the Office of Special Reclamation can’t meet the water quality-based effluent limitations required by the permit. To allow time for Special Reclamation to bring these treatment facilities up to standard and to meet the water quality-based effluent limitations assigned in the permits, we’ve had to incorporate compliance schedules into the permits.

6. What’s the most difficult aspect of your job?

One of the most difficult aspects is making daily decisions that affect other people’s lives. Every permit decision affects people’s lives. Many areas where permits are proposed, citizens have concerns with the proposed activity. Additionally, the permittee and their employees are affected if a permit gets denied, as that will have direct impact on jobs, which affects their lives. That’s the hard part for me. You worry about it.

7. What’s the most satisfying part of your job?

I guess at the end of the day, if you issue a permit that you feel is really a good permit — it protects the environment, keeps people working and no one is complaining about it — that’s about as good as it gets.

8. Can you predict how your job might change in the next few years?

I don’t see it getting any easier. Hopefully we can increase staff and get more and more people on hand who are really good and can support us.

9. These days, is it possible for you to look at a stream and not wonder about its water quality?

Probably not. When I look at streams, I find myself looking at things that can potentially have an impact on the stream. And it’s not just mining. I may look and see someone who has just cleared a piece of property, and you see mud running off the hill, or trash piled along the bank.

10. The late Ken Politan was considered the DEP’s mining NPDES guru. Do you have a new appreciation for Ken’s knowledge and the work he did?

Ken Politan was an excellent person and probably the hardest-working person I’ve ever worked around. I feel extremely

See WATER, Page 8



Cars line up at the Capitol Market in Charleston to drop off Christmas trees for recycling.

DEP collects more than 500 trees

The fish habitats of Beech Fork, East Lynn, Stonewall Jackson, Summersville, Sutton and Tygart lakes will benefit from the Department of Environmental Protection's annual Christmas tree recycling event.

The DEP's Rehabilitation Environmental Action Plan (REAP) sponsored the tree collection on Jan. 10 at Charleston's Capitol Market.

More than 500 trees were collected and later hauled away. The state Division of Natural Resources will sink the trees in selected lakes around the state to create fish habitat improvement structures where fish can hide and find food.

This year's event was the seventh tree recycling day the DEP has sponsored.



REAP's Lisa Facemyer, Sandy Rogers and Niki Davis signed Christmas tree recyclers up for drawings to win a free ski trip to Winterplace or a gift certificate to the Capitol Market, which hosted this year's collection event.

[Click for video story](#)

Dieters watching out for each other

By Colleen O'Neill

The Department of Environmental Protection's Wellness Program has kicked off a weight-loss plan that stresses employee support and accountability.

Called Waist Watchers, the participants meet on Wednesdays for about 30 minutes to share the struggles they encounter on their journey. More than 35 employees registered.

"Most of the Wellness programs operate on the honor system," said Teresa Weaver, DEP Wellness coordinator. "This puts more of a demand on your will power."

Weaver said the program's organizers wanted to incorporate employee support.

"We modeled the program after a popular weight-loss, lifestyle change plan; however, we do not endorse any particular

See **DIETERS**, Page 8

DWWM expects captive crowd at outdoors show

By Tom Aluise

They say it's all about knowing your audience — which helps explain the Division of Water and Waste Management's involvement in this year's West Virginia Hunting and Fishing Show.

The event is scheduled Jan. 20-22 at the Charleston Civic Center and provides an opportunity for hunters and anglers to learn about, as well as purchase goods and services from a wide range of outdoors-related vendors.

There will be more



The Division of Water and Waste Management is a regular at the annual Hunting and Fishing Show in Charleston.

than 200 booths set up for the three-day show, including one manned by staff from the Department of

Environmental Protection's DWWM. The division's Watershed Assessment Branch provides most of the

personnel to work the booth and has been involved with past Hunting and Fishing Shows.

"We've felt this show brings in an audience that is receptive to taking care of the land they're responsible for and can result in a positive impact on the overall health of the waters of West Virginia," said John Wirts, who heads up the DWWM's Watershed Assessment Branch.

The WAB is responsible for sampling state

See **OUTDOORS**, Page 7

Tips for wintertime walking to avoid falls

It's the time of year when slips and falls can occur more frequently due to winter weather conditions. The following information provides sound advice for increasing your awareness of



your surroundings when walking on wet or slippery sidewalks, walkways, parking lots and building entrances.

How to prevent slips and falls:

It is important to always wear the proper

footwear for the time of year. Shoes or boots with leather or plastic soles should be avoided on slippery, wet and icy surfaces. Boots with good rubber treads or over-shoes with rubber treads are suggested for wintertime walking.

Always observe your surroundings. This applies when parking your car, walking to and from your car, as well as walking to and from work. Take note of the walking distances and surface conditions before you park your car.

Do not hurry and jump out of your car. Swing both legs around and position yourself with both legs squarely in front of you with feet properly positioned on the ground. Support your arms by holding onto the vehicle, and then carefully stand up. Walk slowly, and take small steps to maintain your center of balance over your feet.

Walk carefully, anticipate the possibility of falling and never run or hurry on icy walkways. Walking slowly will help you to react quickly to a change in traction if needed.

Keep your eyes focused on where you are going and plan your next steps and moves.

To help your balance, keep your hands at your sides and not in your pockets.

— DEP Safety Committee

Long recognized for contributions to dam safety

By Colleen O'Neill

Dedicating more than three decades to dam safety, the Department of Environmental Protection's Brian Long received kudos for his efforts in the development of the field.

The Association of State Dam Safety Officials recognized his "exemplary contributions to dam safety."



Long

He received the award during a conference in Washington, D.C.

"Brian has played an integral part in ASDSO since it was formed in 1984," said Tom Woosley, the ASDSO representative for Georgia, which is also in the

Southeastern Region.

Woosley has been involved with the ASDSO since 2008, and credits Long with being his mentor, sharing his experience and know-how.

"Brian has been on the Board of Directors and has served as an officer, including president in 1997-1998," Woosley said.

Long continues to serve on the Board and is the association's go-to person on questions regarding the constitution and bylaws, Woosley said.

"Brian is not afraid to share his viewpoint and seeks to improve dam safety not only in West Virginia, but for the entire United States," Woosley said.

Woosley added that Long was instrumental in developing a revolving loan program for dam owners in West Virginia.

OUTDOORS

Continued from Page 6

streams for possible violations of water quality standards or biological impairments.

"The Watershed Assessment staff has historically been made up of biologists and outdoors people," Wirts said. "This show provides a venue to share their enthusiasm about what it is that DEP is trying to protect."

Steve Young, who coordinates the DWWM's efforts in the Hunting and Fishing Show, said the division's booth typically focuses on erosion and sediment control issues. This year will be no different.

DEP staff will hand

out packs of grass seed. Sedimentation is a leading cause of impairment in West Virginia's streams.

"The grass seed is a message to get people to think more about keeping the stream banks vegetated or covering bare spots," Young said. "Every little bit helps."

Said Wirts, "Because controlling erosion is an issue that can largely be addressed at the local level by dealing with bare ground, poorly maintained roads or eroding stream banks on their own land or where they work, we can talk with the public about protecting the environment without getting into more

controversial issues."

The DWWM booth also will feature fish, aquatic insects and a microscope that displays images on a 42-inch screen.

"We have a fairly popular booth because we have live fish," Young said. "We're really popular with the kids, who enjoy playing with the fish and bugs."

Wirts said the adults can learn a lesson or two as well.

"By showing some of the aquatic life from the small streams that they see every day, we hope the public gains a better appreciation for the need to control erosion on their property so that the fish and insects they see close up will have a

better chance of surviving," he said.

The Hunting and Fishing Show runs from noon to 9 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 20; from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 21; and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Jan. 22.

In addition to Wirts and Young, DWWM staff scheduled to work the show include: Susan Rose, Megan Grose, Jeff Ginger, Jeff Bailey, Jim Laine, Ryan Pack, Ann Baldwin, Karen Maes, Karen Light, Mathias Hickman, Mike Whitman, Scott Mandirola, Ben Lowman, Kevin Coyne, Dan Arnold, Mike McDaniel, Jake Harrell, Dave Montali, Jason Morgan, and Nick Murray.

FIT

Continued from Page 2

imagine that in one short year, I would be attempting to fill her shoes. I feel very passionately about water education and hope to make Rose proud.

“She also set the stage for me in a pretty big way. I could never thank her enough for the opportunity, the resources, and the foundation that she passed on to me.”

What’s in store for the future of Project WET?

“I hope to take the foundation that Rose has created and build



Kim Maxwell teaches the concept of a watershed during last year’s Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work day at DEP.

upon it,” Maxwell said. “I will rely heavily on the wisdom of Rose, but I also have some ideas of my own for reaching far

and wide within the state. I love the idea of place-based learning and hope to incorporate a watershed focus into

my workshops.

“I also think that water festivals are a great learning opportunity for fifth-grade students and hope to help create more of those throughout the state.

“I feel very strongly about educating our educators, as well as our children, about precious water resources.

“I love the hands-on, interactive activities in the Project WET Curriculum and I am very excited to be sharing this resource and information throughout West Virginia.”

DIETERS

Continued from Page 6

plan,” she said.

“We do strongly suggest that the employee checks with their doctor before starting any kind of weight-loss plan or physical exercise.

“We have weigh-ins, educational information, guest speakers — and we encourage the employees to write

down everything they eat, so they can keep track of what works for them.

“It’s a three-month program, one that I hope will help employees in their constant quest for a healthier, happier life.”

Weaver added that there will be financial prizes for the most weight lost, based on percentage.

Also, the meetings will be weekly, with

monitored weigh-ins every four weeks.

“In order to be considered for any of the financial prizes, on the weeks without a monitored weigh-in, each participant must submit their weight by 10 a.m. on Wednesday,” she said.

The cash prizes will be a portion of the collected \$1-a-week fee.

There will also be a public acknowledgment when small weight-loss

goals are achieved, like 5 and 10 pounds.

Yvonne Anderson, of the Division of Mining and Reclamation, is the class leader. She is a member of the DEP Wellness Committee.

“I wanted a weight-loss program that was convenient and affordable,” Anderson said.

“With everyone supporting each other, we’ll work on changing our bad eating habits.”

POWER

Continued from Page 1

series of energy efficiency incentive and rebate programs for residents and businesses aimed at offsetting the increasing cost of power, as well as helping the public become a better consumer of energy.

“Finding ways to convey the environmental benefits and the cost savings for customers are two areas that will receive special emphasis,” Fawcett said. “Learning and adopting energy efficient behaviors can help our customers offset rising electric rates, but also play a role in helping the environment.”

According to the MOU, the DEP will include information about Appalachian Power’s energy efficiency programs in DEP-sponsored presentations and initiatives, including West Virginia Sustainable Communities; I Travel Green West Virginia; and Economy, Energy, and Environment — West Virginia.

“We’ll be working together to educate people on the various measures available to them through our energy efficiency programs at Appalachian Power, and stressing the environmental importance of conserving energy,” Fawcett said.

Adolfson is looking forward to including Appalachian Power’s programs in his sustainability efforts.

“The MOU gives me a valid partner and valid resource I can tap into to help residential and commercial customers,” he said.

“What I really like about it is the money that can be made by companies and consumers if they take advantage of the rebates.”

For more information about Appalachian Power programs, go to: www.aeprebates.com/customers.

WATER

Continued from Page 5

fortunate to have had the time and opportunity to learn what I did from him. He was the type of person who, no matter how busy he was, would always stop and answer a question, or try to help you any way possible. He had so much institutional knowledge through all the years he’d been here. Many issues Butch (Borth) and I have to research, which can take hours or even days to figure out, Ken could just give an answer right off the top of his head. Ken is really missed by all of us.

New Additions
Recent DEP hires

- ▶ William Cavender, DMR
- ▶ Michael Fairchild, Adm.
- ▶ John Lockhart, DWWM
- ▶ Jason McDougal, DLR
- ▶ Bryan Vandigo, DWWM



David Kersey served as the auctioneer for the Office of Administration’s blind auction, which benefitted the Combined Campaign program.

More than \$8K raised by Combined Campaign

By Colleen O’Neill

The Department of Environmental Protection raised \$8,147 for charity through the State Employee Combined Campaign program, in conjunction with the United Way.

Money was raised in several ways, including payroll deductions, \$1 “Jean Fridays” and an auction.

After its Christmas luncheon in the Coopers Rock Training Room, the Office of Administration staged a blind auction to raise money for the Combined Campaign.

Employees took items, either new, from around their house, or unwanted presents, and wrapped them or put them in decorative bags with tissue paper.

Bids were made on the prizes without knowledge of what was inside.

“It was entertaining to watch the employees get into a bidding war over a present, and the funny thing was that they had no idea what it was they were bidding for,” said Melinda Campbell, who coordinated this year’s Combined Campaign for the DEP.

Campbell has since left the agency to take a position with the state Division of Personnel.

The blind auction not only is entertaining, it can be financially lucrative, as well.

“This year, we raised \$500 — that’s \$24 more than last year,” Campbell said.

“This auction allows employees to help disadvantaged West Virginians while enjoying themselves.”

Gifts included a screwdriver set, a set of various-sized flashlights, scented lotions and candles, china tea cups, and even homemade gourmet candy.

One gag gift was a pair of china shoes, which were wrapped individually, so two employees got to experience the joy.

“It sits on my nightstand and holds my chapstick,” said Erin Creeland, the proud owner of one of the china shoes.

The other shoe ended up with Tom Aluise.

Aluise’s utterance of, “Man, I got the other shoe!” sent a ripple of laughter through the room.



OTHER DEP offices around the state took part in charitable events during the holiday season. Logan employees contributed nonperishable food items to a local food pantry and also presented their janitor, Millard “Bucky” Stacy, with a gift of \$165 for his hard work throughout the year.

Oak Hill employees collected for Toys for Tots and filled up three large boxes.

The toys were distributed in Raleigh, Fayette, Greenbrier, Mingo, Nicholas, Wyoming and Webster counties.

Applications are available for this year’s MIS cleanup

Applications are now available for the 2012 West Virginia Make It Shine Statewide Cleanup, set for the first two weeks of April.

This annual event is jointly sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection and the Division of Highways and targets cleanups of state streams and public lands.



The Make It Shine program will provide resources such as cleanup materials, waste hauling and landfill fees to community groups volunteering to conduct litter cleanups.

Last year, more than 3,800 volunteers participated in the statewide cleanup. These volunteers removed close to 150 tons of litter and 4,200 tires from West Virginia’s landscape.

The application deadline for those wishing to participate in this year’s cleanup is March 1, 2012. Applications are available through Travis Cooper of the MIS Program at 1-800-322-5530, or by email:

Travis.L.Cooper@wv.gov.

Applications may also be downloaded via the net at: www.dep.wv.gov. Click on “REAP” under the Land Section on the DEP homepage.

DEP retirements

Skip Amole

Administration

Last day: Jan. 20

Years of service: 38

Helen Hardman

Office of Oil and Gas

Last day: Jan. 31

Years of service: 32

FUTURE

Continued from Page 1

made up mostly of students from teacher Sarah Griffith’s Advanced Placement physics class.

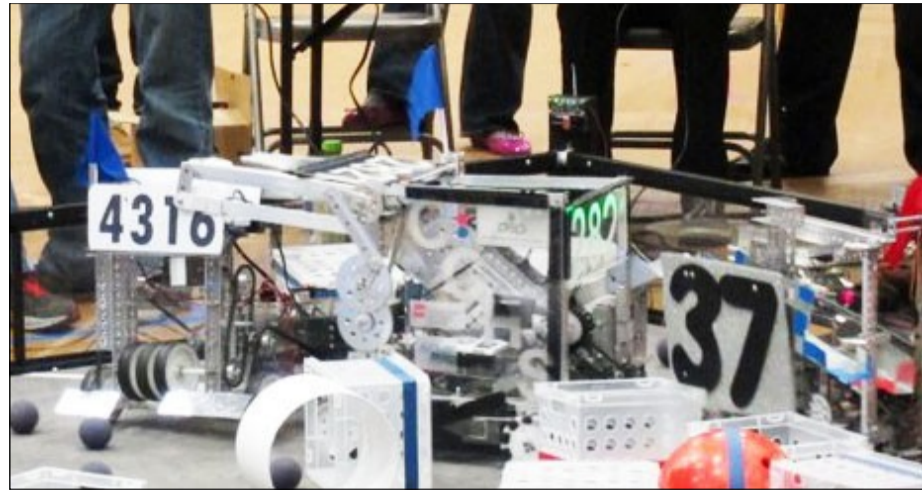
FIRST stands for “For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.” It is a national program that strives to inspire youth to be leaders in science and technology and also encourages mentor-based programs to build those skills.

“That’s part of the goal of this whole thing — to get teenagers to work with professionals and to help demystify all of these things people specialize in,” said Chakrabarty, who focused on robotics and animation while earning a computer engineering degree from West Virginia University.

Chakrabarty initially became involved with Charleston Catholic’s FIRST team three years ago and recruited Crowder, an electrical engineer, to help.

Rowe, a mechanical engineer who designs and builds most of the DAQ’s outreach materials, came on board last year.

Meeting twice a week with the kids since September, Chakrabarty played an active role in writing the software that makes the students’ robot go. Rowe and Crowder were involved in



Top, the students find space is limited for their robot to perform its tasks during competition in Cleveland, Ohio. Right, the team plans to modify its robot for another event.

the construction.

“I drew the basics on the computer and we started refining it from there,” Rowe said.

Griffith said her students have benefitted immensely from the DEP’s assistance.

“These kids are learning everything from them,” she said. “Without them, there’s no way this team could function.

“Not only do they know how to solve problems, they’re teaching the kids how to solve them themselves. This is real-world problem solving. It’s learning from your mistakes.”

The Prototype Posse is made up of Claire Daly, David Zekan, Paul Witsberger, Dominick Centofanti and Michael Carbone. The kids appreciate the adults, as well.

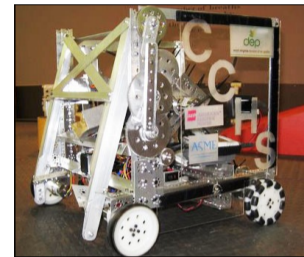
“We probably wouldn’t have a team without them,” Daly said.

In addition to donating time and knowledge to the project, Chakrabarty, Rowe and Crowder secured space at DEP headquarters for the students to work. The team used the DEP’s Coopers Rock Training Room for most of its building sessions.

The students’ robot was completed in time to compete on Jan. 14 in Cleveland, Ohio, in the FIRST Tech Challenge regional tournament.

The competition, called “Bowled Over,” featured matches against other robots and scoring was based on the ability of the wheeled robots to gather and sort balls, as well as manipulate and lift crates.

In each match, a



team’s robot had to work autonomously for a period of time and then be driver controlled.

Out of 23 teams, the Prototype Posse finished 15th and failed to advance out of the regional. The team hopes to compete in another regional next month in Pittsburgh.

Rowe said the students want to add a lifting mechanism to the robot, which will allow it to score more points.

“The kids’ robot did a good job doing the things it was designed to do,” Rowe said. “We just didn’t score high enough to move into the next round.”

New classification structure being developed

The PLANS Project is progressing well. Although there has been little communication with our employees regarding the project since they completed their Job Content Questionnaires (JCQ), we have been busy and a tremendous amount of work has been accomplished.

All JCQs have been reviewed and analyzed, and a Job Evaluation Committee, consisting of representatives from various agencies and occupations, has completed evaluating them by assigning Hay factor points.

Now that all of the analysis and evaluation work is done, the Division of Personnel and The Hay Group are developing a new classification structure, which includes writing new classification specifications and allocating each position to its proper classification.

Once this task is complete, we’ll have concluded the “Job Evaluation, the Measure of Work” phase.

Human Resources corner



PLANS Project

Next on the agenda is the “Pricing, the Value of Work” phase.

As we continue to work, updates will be placed on the PLANS website (www.plans.wv.gov). Also, the PLANS phone line (304-558-3950 ext. 57239) and email address (DOP.PLANS@wv.gov) remain open for your questions and inquiries.