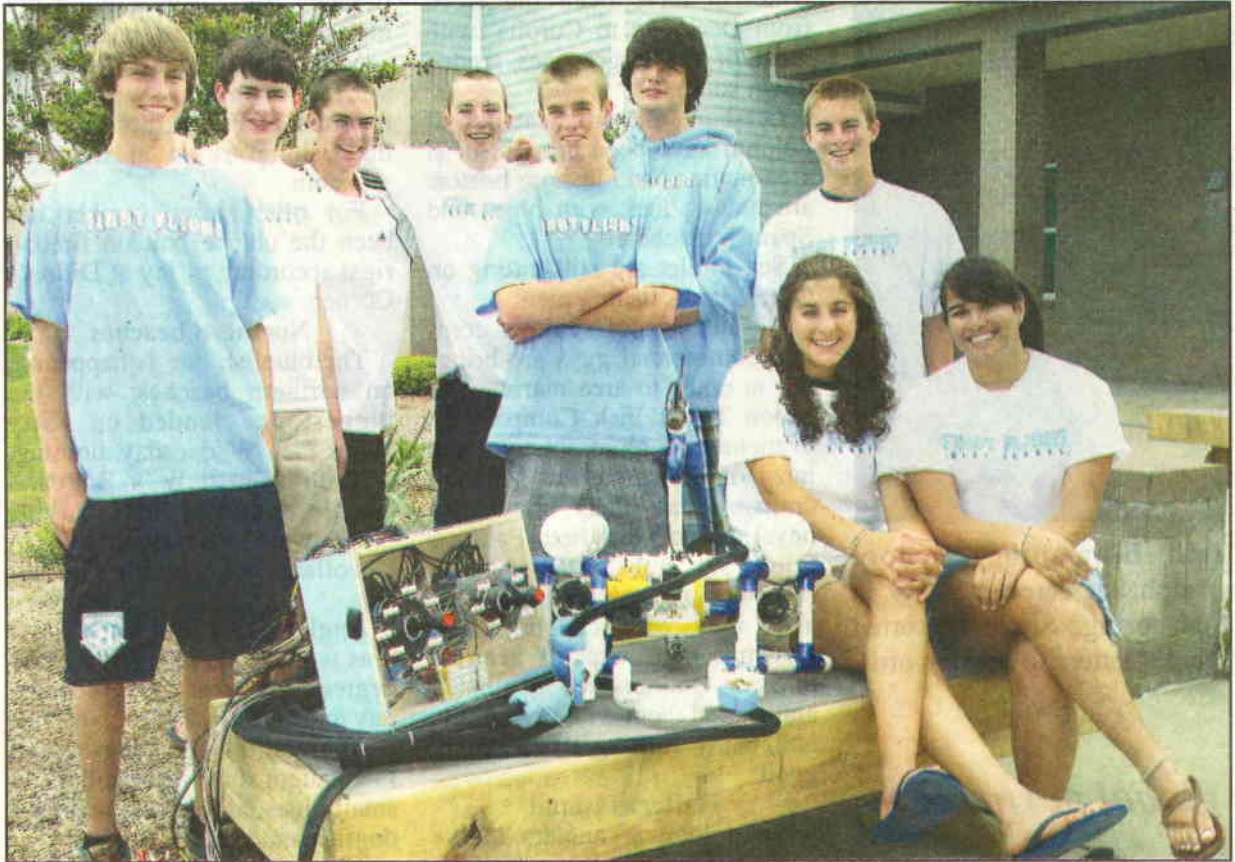


Earn first place



THE FFHS ROV TEAM are shown following their impressive first place win in the multi-state Mid-Atlantic Regional Marine Advanced Technology Education Centers (MATE) ROV Building Competition at Langley AFB on May 2. Shown here are First Flight High School students and team members (from left) standing: Sean O'Neal, David Spruill, Patrick Gray, Andrew Radtke, Barry Lawler, Miles Thomas, Charles Brady; seated: Rebecca Charalambous and Jacke Vaughan are preparing for international competition this summer at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay, Mass. Faculty advisor, science teacher Andrew Thomas says he can't wait to take these students to Massachusetts and watch them "compete against the world." (A. Thomas photo)

FFHS ROV Team wins regional contest

First Flight High School (FFHS) Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) Team won the Mid-Atlantic Regional Marine Advanced Technology Education Centers (MATE) ROV Building Competition on May 2 at Langley Air Force Base in

Newport News, Va.

This is the second year in a row that FFHS has taken an overall 1st place finish in the competition. This year's regional win gives FFHS the opportunity to compete in the international competition at the Massachusetts

Maritime Academy in Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts. Following their 6th place overall finish out of 25 teams last year at the international competition at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography in San Diego, the team is looking forward to another strong finish this year in Massachusetts.

The ROV building competition is a combination of designing, building, budgeting cost versus performance, presenting before a panel of ROV experts and engineers, a professional poster display, and actual water mission testing. The FFHS ROV team took 1st place in the water trials, poster display, and the budgeting analysis. The individual successes in each category netted FFHS ROV the overall competition 1st place.

The 2008-2009 team is comprised of three returning members from the 2008 team and the addition of six newcomers. Returning members include senior Miles Thomas, junior Andrew Radtke, and sophomore David Spruill.

2009 additions include seniors Rebecca Charalambous and Jacke Vaughan; juniors Patrick Gray, Barry Lawler, and Sean O'Neal; and sophomore Charles Brady. Science teacher Andrew Thomas is the ROV team faculty advisor/coach.

This year's competition is
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ROV TEAM

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focused on the use of ROVs as rescue/supply vehicles for stranded submarines. Thomas explains that after a Russian submarine disaster aboard the Kursk in August of 2000, the role of unmanned, tethered ROVs has expanded as a means to avoid the loss of life in dangerous conditions. This was no more apparent than five years later when the Russian government sent out an international distress call to aid in the rescue of another one of their submarines.

The Russian Submarine Priz had become entangled in abandoned fishing net cables, and seven men were trapped 625 feet below the surface. Super Scorpio ROVs from the United States and England were flown to the closest port and loaded on ships to be carried out to the scene. The Priz was freed from the entanglement with only six hours of air remaining in the submarine.

FFHS' ROV was altered this year to serve as a rescue submarine for the mission tasks which included surveying the submarine for damage, carrying and deploying an airline to the stranded submarine, successfully docking the ROV with the submarine, and carrying relief supplies to the stranded submarine. The FFHS ROV Team excelled in this aspect in the Langley AFB competition as they effectively completed the tasks within

the allotted time. This netted the FFHS ROV team 280 out of a possible 300 points for the water mission. The next closest team only scored 205 points during the water trials.

"We would like to thank everyone in the community that made this possible," notes Thomas. "We sold cheesecakes again this year which were graciously prepared by Becky Miller at Outer Banks Cheesecakes." The rest of our funding was supplied by donations from local businesses, the Dare County Schools Career and Technical Education Program; and in particular UNC Coastal Studies Institute Education Programs Coordinator John McCord.

"As we begin preparations to move on to the international competition we look forward to continued support from the community," says Thomas. "All donations are greatly appreciated, and noted in all competition literature and on the ROV."

"This year's team is impressive. These students beat the odds by somehow working out a schedule with nine different team members.

"Between other club, athletic, and academic conflicts, they came together and really overcame obstacles that seemed impenetrable. They were amazing during their engineering review, stoic when systems failed during the water mission, and thoroughly committed when crunch time came.

"I can't wait to take these kids to Massachusetts and watch them compete against the world."