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Robotics team looks to create community STEM hub

The Golden Ratio is asking for the community to help them renovate their new space

By **MICHELLE MEYER**
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A McHenry County-based robotics team of high school students called The Golden Ratio has found success in state, national and international competitions. But they're not stopping there: Now they're looking to create a community center focused on science, technology, engineering and math at their new location in Crystal Lake.

Previously located at Calvary Church, the team over the summer moved right next door to Trinity Baptist Community Church, located at 5918 S. Route 31. With the larger space, team members hope to create a hub that the community can use so STEM activities can reach more people.

The high schoolers spent the summer renovating a 1968 home on the property that sat unused for years and was originally a factory that manufactured retractable bleachers, lead coach Melissa Ryan said. The students decluttered old storage, repaired water and animal damage, removed old insulation and installed new toilets.

"It's not what we were expecting to do this summer, but we're blessed to have this workshop," student Ryan Nolan said.

As competition season ramps up, there are some projects left over that need professional work done like new windows, insulation, gutters and mold removal. Those projects will cost money and time that the high schoolers don't have, Ryan said. She hopes local companies and community members can help them kick-start their dream.

"Hopefully in a few months, it will look totally different," Ryan said. "We hope the community will come on board and help us do that."

Once their new headquarters are spruced up, The Golden Ratio aims to create a center that makes the STEM world more accessible by allowing people all over the county to use the space for meetings, workshops and to use whatever resources others don't have access to. Ryan also sees their space as a STEM supply hub where retired teams can donate materials and new ones can reuse them.

"We want to be a revolving donation center," she said.

The Golden Ratio team includes high schoolers Jackson Woestman,



Michelle Meyer

The 2024 Golden Ratio team (from left): Parker Woestman, Jackson Woestman, Josh Weston, Nehemiah Schultz, Josiah Ryan and Ryan Nolan.

Parker Woestman, Ryan Nolan and Josiah Ryan from Cary-Grove; Josh Weston from Johnsbury High School; and home-schooled student Nehemiah Schultz from Island Lake.

Cary-Grove senior Jackson Woestman will be leaving the team after he graduates, which he is not exactly looking forward to. But he plans to keep STEM in his life by possibly pursuing a career in engineering.

"My life without robotics would be so boring," he said.

Last year, the team finished 23rd out of 56 in its division and received second place in its division for a community connect award at the FIRST World Championships in April in Houston, Texas. The FIRST Championship is an international competition for youth robotics teams to show off their skills in science, technology, engineering and math.

The students work on building



The Golden Ratio team renovates their new workshop by removing old carpet and cleaning out the garage.

Photo provided by Melissa Ryan

and programming a robot capable of moving on its own, picking up objects and even suspending itself by hanging from a pole each year. They are now working on their latest robot specifically designed for this year's competition and their first meets

start in November.

The students hope to make it to the world stage again, but it's not the most important goal.

"We just want to be the best well-rounded team that we can be," Nolan said.