

Eastside High named state finalist in national STEM competition for robotics/school safety project

It's robot vs. school intruder in an award-winning project proposal developed by Eastside High School students.

The proposal has been named one of 250 state finalists for the national Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest. The contest, now in its ninth year, is aimed at encouraging middle and high school students to use STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) to address community problems.



“Over the years the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest has provided a glimpse into the issues facing local communities across the country,” said Ann Woo, senior director of Corporate Citizenship at Samsung in a news release published when this year’s competition was announced. “We’ve seen how some of the nation’s youngest citizens can rally their communities and ignite meaningful, lasting change through the real-world application of STEM subjects.”

The staff and students at Eastside High have all been through A.L.I.C.E training, a nationally-recognized protocol for dealing with would-be attackers, including school shooters. One of the elements of the training involves throwing objects to distract a shooter. Seeing one of the training sessions got junior Thomas Chase thinking about how a robot could help in such a situation.

“We’ve talked in class about how we would defend against a shooting,” he said. “I thought it would be cool if we could develop a robot that could stop or even slow down a shooter by throwing balls.”

He shared the idea with the members of his Robotics Club, and they’ve been on a prototype. Their sponsor, media specialist Coral Antony, submitted the concept to the competition.

“Like all high school students these days, they are concerned about school safety and potential disruptions, and they are interested in finding out if their engineering skills could be of help,” she said.

As a state finalist, the club has already won a Samsung tablet to help with the programming of its robots and the opportunity to move on in the completion. Antony will now submit an ‘activity plan’ outlining the proposed project. The plan will be evaluated based on criteria including problem applicability, community impact, feasibility and originality.

Fifty state winners will receive \$20,000 in technology and supplies to bring their projects to fruition and will have the opportunity to earn even bigger prizes. Samsung will ultimately select ten national finalists, then three grand prize winners, who will receive \$100,000 worth of classroom technology and supplies.



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