

# VCA students head to robotics competition

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HIBBING — Victory Christian Academy (VCA) students are trying their hands at an activity that's becoming more and more popular each year.

A total of 34 teams will be competing in the FIRST Lego Robotics regional tournament on Saturday, Dec. 12, at Duluth Marshall School.

For the first time, VCA's "Silent Bot Deadly" team will be participating in the competition. With less than a week left to prepare, the students are confident despite it being just their first year.

"I think we'll do pretty good," said Calvin Hoppe, a seventh grader and one of the team's programmers. "It's really fun. I enjoy doing it with everybody."

Sixth grader Max Baron is also a programmer. He said being on the team was difficult and full of doing research in the beginning.

"Now we've got it all down," he said confidently. "It's gotten pretty fun."

Baron said the best part of being on the team is learning how to make the robot move and complete different tasks.

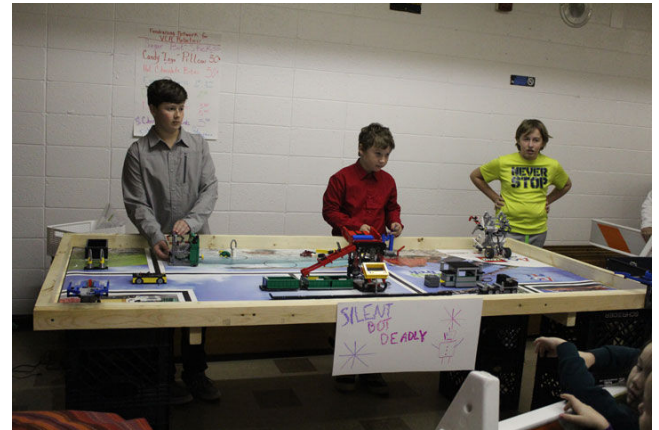
The FIRST Lego Robotics competition requires teams to build and program a robot that can complete a series of missions in two minutes, as well as complete a research project. The students are also tasked with fundraising to help cover their costs.

The nine-student team got a late start on preparing for this year's competition. The season officially started in August, but VCA's team didn't receive approval from the school board until October, said Coach Monica Hoppe.

"I needed to make sure we had interest and that the school approved," she said. "I'm excited to bring this wonderful activity to all ages here and see how successful we can be."

The team has been meeting after school for six to nine hours per week for the past eight weeks.

"They've been working really hard to catch up and get ready to compete," Hoppe said. "The best part



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Tony PotterSixth grader Max Baron, left, fifth grader Izeiah Kois and seventh grader Calvin Hoppe give a public presentation about Victory Christian Academy's FIRST Lego Robotics Team during the annual Christmas Tea last week.

about this is it's not a physical sport — it's all mental.”

Fifth grader Nora Baron, who's part of the fundraising team, said the team has come along way in such a short time.

“At the beginning, I had no idea what we'd be doing,” she admitted. “As we went on, it all started to make sense. Now we're working much better as a team, so it's been pretty good.”

Hoppe said she's pleased to see the progress of the students, and is hoping they continue to show progress at the competition.

“I just want them to have a good experience so they can be more competitive next year,” she said. “It's just a lot of fun for them.”