

Gwinnett students teach the pros



Members of the Peachtree Ridge High School RoboLions joined two other Gwinnett schools at Rockwell Collins, in February, to share their love of robotics.

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It should come as no surprise that **Georgia FIRST® Robotics** will conduct live demonstrations at the **17th Annual Atlanta SMTA Expo** planned in April, at **Gwinnett Center**. The popularity of FIRST has grown exponentially in 11 years, from 40 to 600 teams represented in the area, comprised of students ranging in age from elementary through high school.

This phenomenon caught the attention of engineers at **Rockwell Collins**. In February, two FIRST Robotics teams from **Peachtree Ridge High School (RoboLions)** and **Gwinnett School of Mathematics, Science and Technology (GSMST)**, as well as students from **Maxwell High School of Technology** are invited to the Duluth facility for a friendly competition as part of the company's E-WEEK festivities. But the true purpose goes deeper.

The invitation came at the request of Ernestine Nesby, Rockwell Collins senior buyer, Satellite Comm Systems Procurement. She belongs to a network of working professionals that seek projects in the community appropriate to explore as partnership opportunities for their respective companies. The Georgia FIRST program seemed a natural fit.

FIRST combines the excitement of sport with the rigors of science and technology. Under strict rules, limited resources and time limits, teams are challenged to raise funds, design a team brand, hone teamwork skills, and build and program robots to perform prescribed tasks against a field of competitors. Volunteer professional mentors lend their time and talents to guide each team.

While at Rockwell Collins, students have a unique platform to educate seasoned professionals on ways they can get involved with Georgia FIRST Robotics as coaches, mentors and skilled team helpers. The satellite communications company has historically been involved with FIRST at a national level, but this will be the first year the company is actively participating locally.

"Children need to know that engineering is not just about math. STEM ties into everyday life," Nesby says. "This is one way to help my co-workers learn about FIRST, understand the significance of its growth among area students and opportunities to pass along their talents and skills to help a local FIRST program."

To learn more about Georgia FIRST Robotics, visit www.gafirst.org.

