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*Clover Connection*

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A Robotics Contest at a Livestock Show? While it’s probably not the strangest thing you’ve ever heard, it probably isn’t a pairing you would normally put together. Last Friday my work as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent took me to San Antonio where I got to be a part of the inaugural “Ag-Robotics Contest” at the Stock Show & Rodeo there. 4-H & FFA youth ages 11-18 competed in teams of 3 to 6 members.

For this particular contest, all teams started out with a Lego robotics kit of similar contents and once arriving at the event a list of “challenges” for which they needed to build and program a robot to complete. Participants then got 3 hours to design/build and create the corresponding programs to complete the challenges.

What sort of challenges are robots expected to complete in an “Ag-Robotics” contest? Well, one involved “hitching” to a trailer and hauling it to “home base”. Another was retrieving the cow to put into the trailer to haul to the stock show. There was also a field of yellow Lego “corn” to harvest and then deliver to the feed troughs. Lastly, there were large round hay bales to deliver to the hay barn. All of these challenges take place on a game table that is approximately 4’x 8’ and different point values are earned for completing certain tasks.

For those of you who have been following my columns, you may remember reading about our group of 4-Her’s who have been meeting and working with robotics right here in Henderson County. We started meeting last fall and so far the group has learned about building and programming Lego EV3 robots. I’m excited to announce that we will be having a county robotics contest based on the game/challenges that were used at the San Antonio Contest. Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. at the Henderson County Sr. Citizens Center by Fairpark. Our 4-H robotics program is open to youth who are 8 years old and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade all the way up to age 18 & in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. If you’re interested and haven’t attended one of our previous meetings that’s o.k., we always welcome new participants! Please contact me if you have any questions or would like more information.

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