
NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE
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St. Joseph Public Schools

St. Joseph Public Schools is pleased to announce plans for the construction of a new robotics facility named the Edward J. Todd Innovation Center. The 7000 square foot building will be adjacent to the Career Technical Center of the high school with access from Lakeview Avenue. The building will be utilized primarily as a training facility for the district's robust robotics program, which sponsors 12 teams comprised of students from grades 2-12 and grows each year.

The new robotics facility is possible due to the generous donations from long time community donors who have a passion for K-12 education, especially in the field of Technology. Lead donor, Edward J. Todd, SJHS Class of '54, is a strong supporter of improvements for St. Joseph Public Schools and its students. The Hanson Family Foundation will also provide substantial funding, and has a keen interest in the advancement of engineering careers in the area. SJPS Foundation President Bill Marohn commented, "Without the generous support of Mr. Ed Todd and the Merlin and Carolyn Hanson Family Foundation, this project would not be possible. They understand the importance of the robotics program to the development of a high-tech workforce in our community."

Superintendent Cardon said, "The district is honored to be the recipient of these substantial donations. We are thrilled to provide dedicated space for our students to learn, grow and collaborate. We are proud to provide multiple opportunities for our students and these generous donations allow us to better meet the needs of our technology-minded students. The goal of SJPS robotics is to support student growth and development. While robotics teaches engineering and business skills, students also regularly utilize problem-solving, project management and collaboration when working with real life applications. The skills students gain by participating in the FIRST Robotics program are a key component of their future success and meet the goals of the district's emphasis on STEAM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). The district also realizes the economic impact this program can have on the area workforce and employers."

Board President Amy Porritt-Peirce stated, "The SJPS Board of Education is very grateful to our Foundation Board for spearheading this tremendous opportunity. This facility will greatly enhance the success and opportunities of our FIRST Robotics program and also strengthen our district's emphasis on STEAM. This is a legacy that will touch the lives of current and future students as we strive to prepare them to be future innovators and leaders."

High School Industrial Arts teacher and Robotics instructor, Vic Vroegop, continues to build and improve the robotics program in St. Joe since its inception in 2010. Vic commented, "The forward thinking of our district will result in an amazing space for all of our FIRST Robotics programs. This building will greatly increase each team's ability to design, test and practice with competition robots and "off season" projects. It will also provide training space that will be used for the robotics community in the region."

Student Heather Leany commented, "By having a practice facility, the Average Joes will be able to work more efficiently to optimize design testing, programming and driver practice for our robot projects with the end goal being to win competitions and spreading the ideals of FIRST Robotics."