



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Letitia Austin

Public & Government Relations Manager

laustin@portofh.org

(805) 816-8324

FIRST Robotics Competition Brings the Excitement of Sport and Rigor of Science and Tech to the Port of Hueneme

1,400 high school students compete with their best in tech and engineering

[Port Hueneme, CA – March 4, 2023] — The excitement of sport combined with the rigors of science and technology brought together 1,400 high school students along with their 44 life-sized robots to test the power of collaboration and measure the effectiveness of innovations for the Hueneme Port Regional FIRST Robotics Competition. The Port of Hueneme is host to the competition that will take place over two consecutive weekends from March 4-5 and March 11-12.

Jess Herrera, President of the Oxnard Harbor District addressed the students before the start of the competition by stating he was very proud of the skill and determination on display.

“Don’t be afraid to make a mistake because that’s how things progress in life,” Herrera said. “To the students, I salute all of you. You’re talented and be very proud of your outcomes.”



High school students prepare their robot for competition in Saturday’s FIRST Robotics Competition held at the Port of Hueneme.

Several Ventura County high school teams competed in this year's FIRST Robotics Competition including teams from Arizona, Hawaii, and Nevada as well as international teams from Mexico and the Netherlands.

"We started with two teams here in Ventura County and we now have 15 teams. We know what participation in robotics competitions do for kids," said Velma Lomax, event organizer of FIRST Regional Director of Southern California. "They find out they have a family with FIRST Robotics so that's why we do this."

The theme for this year's competition, presented by HAAS, is entitled "CHARGED UP" to unlock the power of engineering to transform renewable energy and power a better future.

FATHOMWERX staff are serving as mentors by assisting teams of students and their teachers throughout the competition. FATHOMWERX is a collaboration between the Port of Hueneme, Economic Development Collaborative, Matter Labs, and Naval Base Ventura County. The lab provides a physical collaborative space where government, business owners/entrepreneurs, and academic stakeholders can innovate, experiment, and transfer/transition capabilities.

"Robotics and automation are important building blocks of the future, and we are proud to co-host this event at FATHOMWERX and see how these students are pushing the technologies and capabilities forward in very innovative and creative ways," said Alan Jaeger, Ventura TechBridge Director, Office of Research and Technology Applications Manager, NSWC Port Hueneme Division.



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Port Hueneme Mayor, Bobby Martinez said, "This is a special experience and lifelong memory for everyone. The truth is these students are our future."

During the opening ceremony, the Port of Hueneme and the City of Port Hueneme presented a check donation to FIRST Robotics in the amount of \$5,000 from their Community Benefit Fund. The CBF was established in 2015 by the Port of Hueneme and the City to achieve the mutual goal of enriching the community through a spirit of collaboration. The Port and City crafted an agreement that states if the Port's annual revenue exceeds \$13 million, a total of \$100,000 in Port funds is allocated to the CBF. The Port and City then come together to vote on how to invest this funding in the community. They unanimously agreed to support the robotics competition.



CBF check presentation to FIRST Robotics Competition (left to right): Port Hueneme City Mayor, Bobby Martinez; Oxnard Harbor District President, Jess Herrera; FIRST Robotics Event Organizer, Velma Lomax; Port Hueneme City Councilmember Martha McQueen Lejohn; Ventura County Supervisor Vianey Lopez; and Armando Gonzales representing Congresswoman Julia Brownley's office.

“The Port is committed to community enrichment,” said Kristin Decas, CEO & Port Director. “Since the Port’s inception, we have embraced a legacy of trade and engagement by having a meaningful impact in our communities. CBF is one of the ways we are able to forge partnerships that benefit the public by bringing funding to programs like the FIRST Robotics competition.”

About FIRST

[FIRST®](#) is a robotics community that prepares young people for the future through a suite of inclusive, team-based robotics programs for ages 4-18 (PreK-12) that can be facilitated in school or in structured afterschool programs. Boosted by a global support system of volunteers, educators, and sponsors that include over 200 of the Fortune 500 companies, teams operate under a signature set of [FIRST Core Values](#) to conduct research, fundraise, design, build, and showcase their achievements during annual

challenges. An international not-for-profit organization founded by accomplished inventor Dean Kamen in 1989, *FIRST* has a [proven impact](#) on STEM learning, interest, and skill- building well beyond high school. [Alumni](#) of *FIRST* programs gain access to exclusive scholarships, internships, and other opportunities that create connections and open pathways to a wide variety of careers. Learn more at firstinspires.org

About Port of Hueneme

The Port of Hueneme is one of the most productive and efficient commercial trade gateways for niche cargo on the West Coast. The Port is governed by five locally elected Port Commissioners. The Port consistently ranks among the top ten U.S. ports for automobiles and fresh produce. Port operations support the community by bringing \$2.2 billion in economic activity and creating 20,032 trade-related jobs. Trade through the Port of Hueneme generates more than \$173.2 million in direct and related state and local taxes, which fund vital community services. In 2017, the Port of Hueneme became the first port in California to become Green Marine certified and was voted the Greenest Port in the U.S. at the Green Shipping Summit. www.portofh.org.

About FATHOMWERX

FATHOMWERX is a public-private laboratory, community, and resource for technological innovation that fuses small and non-traditional companies, academic institutions, and other Department of Defense stakeholders together to work on the most challenging problems in the port and maritime domains. FATHOMWERX's dynamic platform is designed to create a high rate of return for all participants. Through the promotion of divergent thought, neutral facilitation, and the use of a growing ecosystem, the goal of FATHOMWERX is to bring the right minds together to solve challenging problems. The Founding Partners of FATHOMWERX are the Ventura County Economic Development Collaborative, Port of Hueneme, Naval Surface Warfare Center, and Matter Labs.

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