



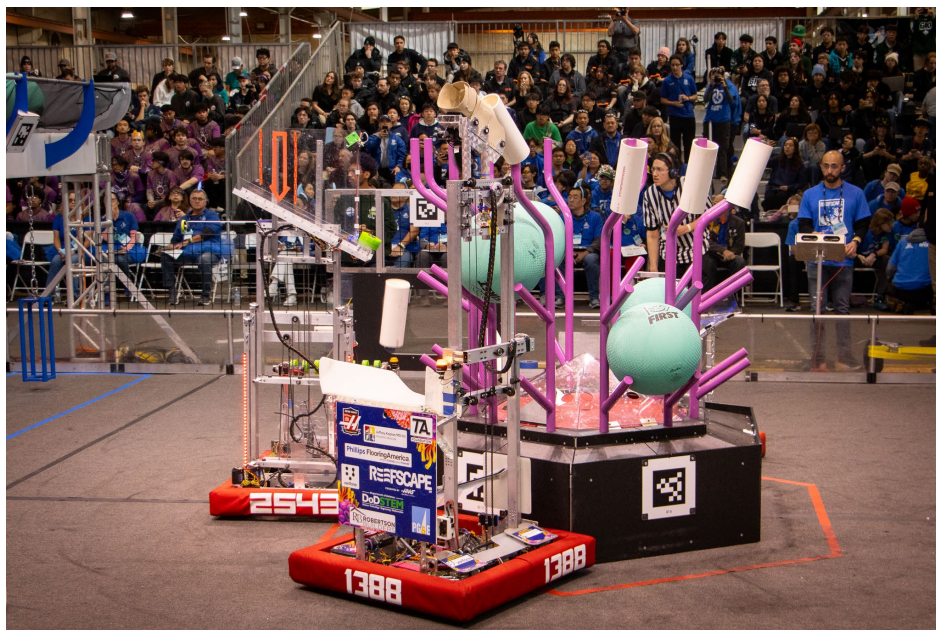
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## Collaborating for a Brighter Future: *FIRST* Robotics Competition Dives into Innovation at The Port Hueneme

*2,000 high school students from around the world come together to demonstrate their engineering prowess and innovative solutions for a better world with healthy oceans.*

**[PORT HUENEME, CA – March 1, 2025]** – Continuing a tradition of collaboration, the Port of Hueneme and City of Port Hueneme proudly welcomed the annual *FIRST* Robotics Competition for the fourth year in a row. This exciting two weekend event is held inside the FATHOMWERX lab — a dynamic space for innovation and technology transfer between the Port of Hueneme, Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA), Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC), the Economic Development Collaborative, and Matter Labs.



*Opening match of the FIRST Robotics Competition at the Port of Hueneme.*



This year's *FIRST* Robotics DIVE theme dared students to journey into the depths of the ocean and navigate challenges that mirror the complexities of underwater exploration. From maneuvering intricate mazes, collecting elusive treasures, and overcoming seemingly impossible obstacles, these young innovators used this year's competition to showcase their technical prowess and creative thinking skills. Beyond the technical challenges the DIVE theme emphasized the critical importance of ecology and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) education through exploration of our underwater world and allowed students to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of our planet's vast and vital aquatic ecosystems and the ever important need to protect them.

"Events like the *FIRST* Robotics Competition are vital for nurturing future leaders in STEM. By providing a platform for students to innovate and collaborate, we are investing in a future where technology and ecology work hand in hand for a sustainable world," said Port Commissioner Celina Zacarias, "Hosting the *FIRST* Robotics Competition aligns perfectly with our mission as it inspires the next generation to develop technological solutions for ecological challenges."



(Left to Right) Adam Vega, the Port of Hueneme; Patty Quiroz, Office of Assemblymember Steve Bennet; Michaela Perez, City of Oxnard Councilmember District 6; Vianey Lopez, Ventura County Supervisor District 5; Aimee Beck, *FIRST* Robotics; Celina Zacarias, Commissioner of the Oxnard Harbor District; Jess Lopez, Mayor Pro-Tem City of Port Hueneme; Laura Hernandez, Port Hueneme Councilmember; Luis McArthur, City of Oxnard Mayor; Velma Lomax, *FIRST* Robotics; Angelica Cisneros, Office of Senator Monique Limon; Arnoldo Torres "Young Quicks", Oxnard Hip-Hop Artist.



The *FIRST* Robotics Competition is supported in part by the Community Benefit Fund (CBF) — a collaborative initiative between the Port of Hueneme and the City of Hueneme — and is aimed at supporting and enriching the local community. The event underscored the powerful synergy between technology, education, and community collaboration. Funding is sourced from revenue generated by the Port of Hueneme's operations and extend beyond financial support alone. The projects selected must also embody the values of community engagement and collaboration to ensure that young minds are equipped with the skills and inspiration to tackle future challenges. The CBF's support plays a key role in ensuring that the *FIRST* Robotics Competition can bring students, educators, industry leaders, and community members together to share in a dynamic environment where ideas and expertise are shared freely.

"We are proud to host this groundbreaking event at the Port of Hueneme," said Jess Lopez, Mayor Pro Tem from the City of the Port Hueneme. "By uniting the community, industry, and education sectors, we are fostering a dynamic environment for innovation and growth. We look forward to witnessing the incredible creations and solutions our participants will develop with the DIVE theme."

Attendees were abuzz with excitement as the master of ceremonies welcomed the participants and attendees to the FATHOMWERX Lab. Amidst applause and cheers, dignitaries from the Port & City of Hueneme presented a large ceremonial check to Aimee Beck, Regional Director of *FIRST*, which represented the official start of the event and set the tone for the exciting challenges ahead. The atmosphere surrounding the competition was electric with students, educators, elected officials, and community members eager to witness the beginning of the competition. Without further ado, the 46 teams representing 920 students from Los Angeles, Ventura, Northern California, Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada, Canada, China, and Mexico were ready and set to go.



*Students preparing their robot for their next round of competition.*

“We are thrilled to be a part of this incredible event. It is a fantastic program that inspires young people to innovate and collaborate while strengthening their interest in the exciting world of STEM. I love coming to this event every year! The FIRST Robotics event is a dynamic, exciting competition that offers a unique perspective for students. EXWC is honored to again sponsor a team of young people who are so engaged and enthusiastic about this career field. A career in STEM is an exciting path with endless opportunities to create, innovate and find solutions to make the world a better place” said NAVFAC EXWC Technical Director Kail Macias.

With Weekend 1 of the Port Hueneme Regional Competition off to a great start, the bar is set as Weekend 2 teams witness the exceptional talent and perseverance they will be up against. It goes without saying that these 1,080 students from Los Angeles, Ventura, Northern California, Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada, Armenia, China, The Netherlands, and Türkiye will be filled with determination to do their very best as each team works towards their ultimate goal of securing a spot at the Championship in Houston, Texas, from April 16-19.

### **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](http://firstinspires.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.

### About the 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. Five locally elected Port Commissioners govern the Port. The Port consistently ranks among the top ten U.S. Ports for automobiles and fresh produce. Port operations support the community by bringing \$2.8 billion in economic activity and creating 25,000 trade-related jobs. Trade through the Port of Hueneme generates more than \$236 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](http://www.Portofh.org).

To learn more about the Community Benefit Fund visit:  
<https://www.portofhueneme.org/cbf>.

### About the City of Port Hueneme

The City of Port Hueneme (pronounced "Why-nee-mee") is a unique community along Ventura County's Gold Coast just south of the City of Oxnard and Channel Islands Harbor. Port Hueneme is unique because of its rich history, culture, and traditions, dating back to the Chumash Indians who made their home here for centuries and because of its long-established, close relationship with the Port, U.S. Navy's Port Hueneme and Point Mugu naval facilities. For more information visit: <https://www.ci.port-hueneme.ca.us/>