

NEW STUDENT GROUP IN GROTON

Groton Area High School students have a new club to join this year with the introduction of the Future Business Leaders of America.

Currently 20 South Dakota high schools, including Groton, are members of the FBLA, which is the largest business career student organization in the world with 215,000 high school members.

The purpose of the organization is primarily to prepare students for careers in business. Groton Area High School Business Educator Brooke Lingbeck is the FBLA advisor for the Groton club.

Officers for Groton's FBLA, include Gabe Dohman, president; Courtney Kurtz, vice president; Jasmine Schaller, secretary; Tori Bjerke, treasurer; Kaitlin O'Neill, reporter; Taylor Gustafson, historian; and Sheldon Herr, parliamentarian.

Groton FBLA members planned several events this year, including various fund raising activities. Their first event, held in September, was a bake sale at a GHS volleyball game.

One amusing fundraiser involved placing small pink flamin-



goes on the lawns of unsuspecting Groton homeowners. For a small fee the flamingoes will be moved to another lawn.

Superintendent Joe Schwan was the first "lucky" recipient of this small flock.

Groton FBLA members attended the FBLA Fall Leadership Conference in Sioux Falls and the Officer Leadership Institute in Redfield in November. They'll also be attending the Spring Leadership Conference in Rapid City in April.

GAHS NAMED ON NEWSWEEK LIST

Groton Area High School ranked 158th in Newsweek Magazine's top 500 highest performing schools in the nation in the magazine's report released this fall.

Newsweek's list of "America's Top High Schools" is a ranking of schools based solely on achievement. The schools are ranked based upon performance indicators (for example, proficiency rates on state standardized assessments).

This evaluation identified high schools that perform at or above the 80th percentile within each state. In order for Groton Area High School to receive such a high ranking, several factors must exist: top quality teachers, hard working students, strong parental sup-

port, and a wide variety of activities to challenge and motivate their participants.

Groton Area High School Principal Anna Schwan said there was an extensive list of questions that had to be answered for the report.

Nearly 89 percent of the Groton's graduates plan to attend college and almost that many (88.55%) graduated from high school this past spring. The poverty rate (12.89%) for the school district is part of the formula used by the national magazine. Statistics also revealed that Groton's score for college readiness was 89.67.

INTEREST IN ROBOTICS CLUB GROWING IN GROTON

Where can you find a STEM-based student activity with such enthusiasm that they ask the coach if they can have extra practice time and where participation has grown 500 percent in just three years?

Groton Area High School found it in VEX Robotics.

“Robotics offers students something to get excited about outside the typical sports, music and other traditional extracurricular activities,” GT Robotics Volunteer Coach Jim Lane said.

“Robotics provides hands-on career exploration in fields including engineering, computer programming, mechanics and technical writing.”

Groton Tiger (GT) Robotics began three years ago with four students when the Department of Education provided a robotics starter kit to the school’s Industrial Technology I class. The IT classroom activity hooked the students; they formed a team, calling themselves the Geek Squad and competed in the first state competition sponsored by VEX Robotics in the spring of 2013.

VEX Robotics is an international program in which the company sells participating teams parts to build a robot (metals, wires, motors and a micro-processor) and establishes an annual “game” for competition, which includes basic challenges where the robot must be pre-programmed to autonomously accomplish a task and a driver operates the robot with a radio-controlled joy-stick.

Groton’s Geek Squad placed third at the state competition, and because the first- and second-place teams were unable to attend, the Geek Squad had the amazing opportunity to attend the World VEX Robotics competition.

Although the team didn’t place in the world competition, they learned so much through the process of competing against and observing more than 600 teams from all over the world.

“Each robotics team involves a variety of roles students can explore and grab hold of, with self-confidence growing as each student finds his or her unique niche,” Lane said.



Last fall, the four “robotists” shared their excitement with classmates and younger students, making posters and using word of mouth to let others know about this new program available in their school.

GT Robotics added a second team — for a total of 10 robotists — and the two teams met at least once weekly throughout most of the school year and participated in four competitions, including the state competition in Sioux Falls.

For the 2014-15 school year, GT Robotics has grown to four teams and 21 students ranging in age from 6th grade through seniors. It remains an extracurricular activity still coordinated and led by parent volunteers, with the school now providing a designated former small classroom for work space and equipment storage.

GT Robotics has already hosted South Dakota’s first VEX robotics competition of the season, which was open to all 20+ VEX-registered teams in the state. Ten teams from four schools participated.

Plans are underway for GT Robotics to host another competition later this year and compete in at least five other competitions, including the state competition to be held in Mitchell this winter.

“This new activity also teaches teamwork; to be successful they must work together to design, build, document and operate a robot with an adult coach providing very minimal, general direction. It provides applied academics opportunities—with students putting into practice, in a very hands-on way, classroom learning and life experiences,” Lane said.

“Perhaps most importantly, the students have a lot of fun along the way!”

