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## LEGOroboticstourneysetatISU

### Top15teamswill advancetostate contestinBoise

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POCATELLO — More than 100 tech-savvy students from throughout the region will compete in Southeast Idaho's first ever FIRST LEGO League robotics tournament Saturday at Idaho State University.

The top 15 teams will advance to the Idaho State Lego Tournament in Boise, and the winners of that event will earn a berth in the international tournament next spring in Atlanta. Competitors will travel from as far away as Leadore and Draper, Utah. The event is sponsored by Partners for Prosperity and ISU's colleges of Engineering, Technology, Arts and Sciences. It is funded through two federal grants at the university.

The tournament, which is free to the public, will be at Reed Gym from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Lawrence Beaty, an instructor in ISU's electronics department, said the FIRST LEGO League is a good way to expose children to science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"After Sputnik, we had a huge national push to get kids into these areas," Beaty said, adding countries such as China and India are now surpassing the United States in those fields.

FIRST LEGO League was founded by faculty at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the late 1990s. The program combines interactive robotics and a research presentation with a sports-like atmosphere. Teams include up to 10 members ages 9 to 14 who focus on skills such as team building, problem solving, analytical thinking and creativity, according to the program's Web site.

Teams are provided with a challenge every fall that is based on real world problems facing scientists. This year's challenge is "The Power Puzzle: Energy Resources — Meeting the Global Demand."

The challenge includes designing, building, programming and testing autonomous Lego robots that perform a series of tasks. Teams must also do research and create a solution to an aspect of the challenge and present that solution to 11 judges.

"There's data that shows kids who participate in FIRST competitions have a much greater interest in (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education and careers," Beaty said.



**JOE KLINE/ IDAHO STATE JOURNAL** Idaho State University staff and ESTEC student volunteers help build objects for the FIRST LEGO League Robotics tournament set at Reed Gym on Saturday in Pocatello. About 40 teams from across the state are expected at the first sanctioned FIRST LEGO competition in Idaho.



