

The Virginia Beach Sun

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Virginia Beach's Hometown Newspaper

A Free Independent Newspaper!

Merrill: "A real joy" leading Beach schools

Superintendent James Merrill going back to North Carolina to run Wake County schools

By Nathan Denny
Staff Writer

Superintendent James G. Merrill is stepping down from his position within the Virginia Beach City Public Schools administration to take a position in Wake County schools in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Since 2006, when Merrill started as superintendent in Virginia Beach, he has become a beloved colleague, a respected figure and a ferocious agent for growth and improvement in the city schools.

And he's very proud of the school division's success.

"We've increased our graduation rate, lowered the drop-out rate. Advanced Placement enrollment is up, minority participation and SAT scores are up. There are a lot of academic standards that show us we are doing well," Merrill said.

Merrill was awarded the 2013 Virginia Superintendent of the Year title, topping off his time in Virginia Beach and crowning his final year here with a deserved recognition of his propensity toward excellence. Also, during his time in Virginia Beach he was installed to the

governing board of the American Association of School Administrators.

Any Virginia Beach resident who has a connection with the schools - parent, student, educator, administrator - has heard of the VBCPS strategic plan, "Compass to 2015." This guiding strategic document was founded by Merrill and has influenced the direction and objectives of the schools since its implementation.

The plan emphasizes preparing stu-

awareness.

"That's the new driver for us," Merrill said of the strategic plan, "but it's our employees who make it work in the classrooms, and the families who embrace it—that is what makes this plan succeed."

The students have responded well to the plan, says Merrill. Each year graduates are obtaining more money in scholarships, which is a good indicator of success in education. School Board Chairman

beginning the next chapter in his career, is no unfamiliar place to him. Merrill received his bachelor's degree in secondary English education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and continued with his master's degree in educational administration from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC. He then received a doctoral degree from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

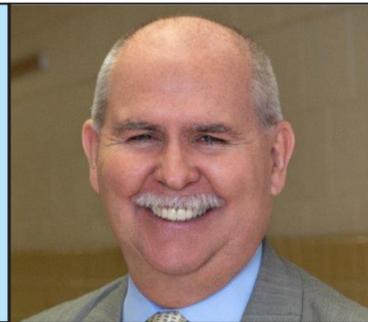
Not only was all of his higher education in North Carolina, but most of Merrill's career has been in that same state. Before coming to Virginia Beach, Merrill was working in the Alamance-Burlington school system in North Carolina, near Elon University. Merrill has worked in Wake County in the past and has many friends and colleagues with whom he is looking forward to reconnecting.

"It will be fun to go back," Merrill said of Wake County. "It's been 13 years. It has changed a lot, it has grown a lot. They are growing by the thousands every year. This growth will be a huge challenge, and they want to continue to improve. I'm looking forward to it."

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"People know about Virginia Beach. It is still a top school division. I'm proud to have been a part of it."

Dr. James Merrill



dents for future education and careers by instilling skills such as effective communication, collaboration, creativity, problem solving, innovation, and global

Dan Edwards called Merrill a "visionary" in regards to his leadership and foresight when constructing Compass to 2015.

North Carolina, where Merrill will be

News of the Day

By Greg Goldfarb, editor

City preserves Cavalier Hotel

\$18 million for renovation

The Cavalier Hotel, which has stood proudly for almost 90 years on Atlantic Avenue looking out over the mighty Atlantic Ocean, is poised to stand for 90 more, following City Council's commitment to preserve and restore the cherished historic building.

On a 7-1 vote, council approved an \$18 million financial package for Virginia Beach-based developer and businessman Bruce Thompson to upgrade and improve the resort inn in accordance with an overall \$259 million Cavalier site development project. One hundred new homes, to be constructed around the hotel, is part of the plan as are plans to renovate its seaside sister hotel located across the street. Thompson's set to purchase the property by July 22 for \$35 million with construction to begin by the fall.

The \$18 million from city includes \$8.2 million as an economic development grant; \$2.3 to purchase easements on the hotel's lawn and entrance to protect it from future development; \$2.5 million to turn Cavalier Drive, the hotel's main road, into a public street; plus \$5 million from project-driven taxes.

Before approving the funding, council held public hearings, where many residents maintained that the city couldn't afford tax dollars for the effort; while others said that the Cavalier, along with the Cape Henry Lighthouse, are the city's two most famous landmarks. The Cavalier Hotel, opened in 1927, is 86 years old. The Virginia Beach Sun began publishing that same decade.

TC's Guadalajara closes after tragedy; owner has new plans

Guadalajara's restaurant and bar on Columbus Street at Town Center has closed for the sake of public safety and public relations following early morning gun violence on June 29 that left one man dead, Rashawn R. Dukes, 25, of North Chesterfield. Four others were injured and one person was grazed by gunfire.

While not directly linked to the eatery, the nearby trouble drew and still draws extensive media coverage, much like in June of 2012 when following a party for local NFL celebrity Michael Vick at the establishment, a party-goer was shot outside in the leg. This shooting occurred near a parking garage in the same block as the restaurant and a large sporting goods store.

Restaurant owner Jerry Rodriguez told *The Virginian-Pilot* that he will announce his future plans in the weeks to come.

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Girl Scouts helping out at Nimmo



Girl Scout Cadettes Sarah Sutherland, center, and Claire Starke, right, pose with the llama and volunteer from Hunt Club Farm who came to their One World, One Community event at Nimmo United Methodist Church.

Girl Scouts raise \$500 for humanitarian groups

"One World, One Community" held at Nimmo Methodist

By Nathan Denny
Staff Writer

Two Virginia Beach girl scouts recently planned, organized and put on an event to raise awareness and funds for several global issues.

Claire Starke of the Redmill area and Sarah Sutherland from Creeds near Pungo, both members of Troop 394, teamed up in an effort to earn the second-highest achievement in the girl scouts organization and at the same

time, bring help to those in need.

In Girl Scouts, the hierarchy of achievements goes the way of many other institutions with gold, silver and bronze being the top three.

The Silver award, the second highest honor to achieve, is for middle school scouts and requires 50 hours of community leadership action. The scouts can work in groups for this award, which led Starke and Suther-

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"Can't go wrong, only awesome!"

Isa Cohen from Chick's Beach competing in kite boarding tourney in Puerto Rico

By Nathan Denny
Staff Writer

A city bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, etched with inlets, bays and back waters, Virginia Beach is the ideal home for lovers of the water - those who can find the opposing fringes of absolute peace and sheer thrills out in the blue world.

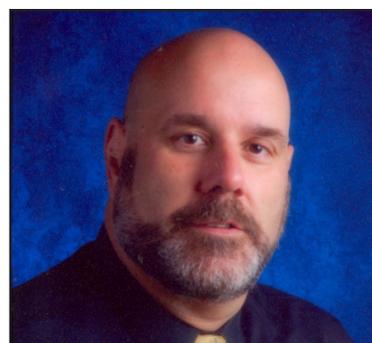
Whether paddleboarding on a calm, glassy ocean or cutting through tumultuous wake on a surfboard, Isa Cohen is one of those lovers of water.

Cohen, 30, is a water skier, wake boarder, surfer, paddle boarder, Chick's Beach resident and recently added kite

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Isa Cohen in action at an undisclosed location.



James D. Miller

Miller named "High School Principal of the Year"

James D. Miller is the VBASSP "High School Principal of the Year". He is currently completing his fourth year as building principal at Bayside High School and Health Sciences Academy. Prior to coming to Bayside Miller was an assistant principal at Landstown High School where he was recognized in 2007 as the VBASSP "Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year." Miller is the current president of the Virginia Beach Association of Secondary School Principals.

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Feature Story

Girl Scouts raise \$500 for humanitarian groups

Continued from Page 1

land to team up and form their project. "I got the idea after participating in a challenge last summer that brought up issues of homelessness, hunger, and unclean water," Starke said. "It was a good learning experience."

Starke and Sutherland wanted to provide that same learning experience for members of the Virginia Beach community.

Their "One World, One Community" event, held recently on the grounds of Nimmo United Methodist Church, used enlightening activities paired with educational posters and booths to demonstrate to participants the dire poverty, health issues, and lack of education in many parts of the world.

The event had various stations, each one providing insight into a global issue. One station had microscopes focused in on water droplets. Participants could see the bacteria and diseases first-hand that are present in dirty water, on which much of the world survives.

Other stations demonstrated what it is like to eat on less than \$1.25 a day, the difficulty of transporting water and the difficulty in getting to school for many people.

"Every station had a bucket for donations as well as cards with more information on them," Sutherland said.

The girls diligently enlisted the help of volunteers to help make their project a reality.

Nimmo United Methodist Church (NUMC), Starke's home church and Oak Grove Baptist Church, Sutherland's home church, sent volunteers as well as donations of food and services.

Stop Hunger Now and Habitat for Humanity were two of the humanitarian organizations represented at the event, each with booths and information on how to contribute and volunteer.

Hunt Club Farms and the "McNulty family" provided animals for a petting

The special event raised public awareness about poverty, health issues and the lack of education in many parts of the world.

zoo: ducks, sheep, a llama and a giant rabbit, which were a hit with crowd. At this station, participants could donate to World Vision, a Christian organization that would use the funds to provide farm animals to families in the third world.

"We even had girls from other girl scout troops come and volunteer," Sutherland said. "It wasn't their project, but they came out to help us anyway."

The event was such a huge success, NUMC has already asked the girls if they would put on the event next year. In total, the girls raised over \$500 for various humanitarian organizations, while at the same time bringing attention to these issues and raising awareness in their hometown.

"It took a long time and a lot of perseverance; we wrote a lot of letters, had a lot of meetings," Starke said. "But it was



Members of the Nimmo United Methodist Church Men's Group donated \$300 worth of food that they cooked out during the One World, One Community event hosted by Girl Scout Cadettes Claire Starke and Sarah Sutherland.



Claire Starke, center left, and Sarah Sutherland, center right, members of Girl Scout Cadette Troop 394, stand at an activity station with troop leader Yvette Starke, left, and Girl Scout volunteer Breanne Brooks, right, during their One World, One Community event.

all worth it in the end. It came together better than I could have imagined."

"They put in way more than the 50 hours required," said Yvette Starke, Claire's mother and Girl Scout leader. "Weekend after weekend, in the afternoons after school, they would be getting together and coming up with more ideas." With the planning and execution of their project behind them, Starke and Sutherland have almost completed the required steps to achieve their silver award.

Kaitlin Smith, public relations manager of the Girl Scouts of the Colonial Coast,

explained that earning the award involves more than the project itself.

"There is a process they must go through," Smith said. "They first must submit a proposal, which must be approved. They have to track and log all of their hours on the project and they must submit a final report which goes through an approval process."

When all the steps have been completed, Starke and Sutherland will be presented with their Silver awards at a ceremony in October.

Smith says the Girl Scouts of the Co-

lonial Coast council (GSCCC), which is headquartered on Cedar Road in Chesapeake, serves 16,000 girls and over 6,500 volunteers.

"Our area covers up to Williamsburg and Gloucester, down to Ocracoke in North Carolina, and west out to Southampton," Smith said. "We are a volunteer-led organization and we have a lot of volunteers."

For more information, visit the GSCCC website, www.gscoc.org Nathan Denny, 757-748-2898, njdenny@vt.edu.

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Feature Story

Isa Cohen from Chick's Beach competing in kite boarding tourney in Puerto Rico

Continued from Page 1

boarding to her repertoire as she will be representing the United States in the upcoming Kite Surf Pro (KSP) World Tour Championships this fall in Puerto Rico.

"The competition features 22 men and 11 women kiteboarders from all over the world," Cohen said. "From the States there are two girls from Hawaii and me." Kiteboarding, also called kitesurfing, is a water sport that borrows elements from wakeboarding and windsurfing to create an extreme experience, using the power of the wind and a giant, maneuverable kite as a source of speed and propulsion.

Cohen, who has lived in Virginia Beach for five years, grew up in the world of water sports. Her mother is a skiing competitor and she had Cohen and her older sister out on the water at a young age. In the summers, they would go to skiing summer camps and compete in state competitions.

While her sister continued skiing, Cohen switched to wakeboarding, which became her new passion.

Cohen attended Longwood University in Farmville and earned a degree in business. Following graduation she moved to the Hampton Roads area and began working. In 2009, she was introduced to kite boarding.

"I saw someone kiteboarding and I thought, I've got to do that," she said.

Cohen began taking lessons in the Outer Banks, but soon learned of a friend who taught lessons in Virginia Beach. With many similarities to wakeboarding, kiteboarding came very naturally to her and when her friend asked if she wanted to travel with her to teach kiteboarding in the Florida Keys, Cohen did not hesitate in leaving her desk job.

When she returned to Virginia Beach in 2010, Cohen opened Tula Adventure Sports, located on Marina Shores Drive off Great Neck, which offers lessons and tours in stand-up paddleboarding, wakeboarding, kiteboarding, water skiing and kayaking. It offers the only downstream tour in Virginia Beach, she said.

"My dad helped me out a lot," Co-

hen said. "He's a business owner, so he helped me navigate through getting all the licenses and everything it takes to get started."

The word 'tula' means 'balance' in Sanskrit, alluding to the balance required on a board, but also the balance in life of enjoying simple pleasures and the natural beauty so inherent in our city amidst the rush of our busy lives.

Although busy at work, Cohen is still finding time to get in the water and practice as much as possible for the competition.

"With kiteboarding, the more you're out there in the water, the better you get," Cohen said. "You try to work on staying in the waves, practicing your timing between turns, positioning your kite."

In addition, her training regimen includes swimming, lifting and hot yoga, which increases her balance, core strength and flexibility—all important strengths to have when kiteboarding.

The two KSP World Tour Championship events that are scheduled so far take place in Puerto Rico in October and Hawaii in November.

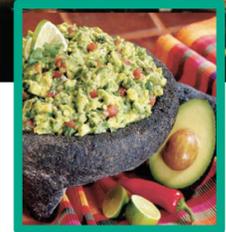
"It has been a dream of mine to go to Hawaii. I'm really looking forward to that competition," she said.

Two more competitions in Spain's Canary Islands and Portugal are awaiting scheduling. Competitors will be judged at all four events and the world champion will be crowned at the conclusion.

Most of the competitors to this year's KSP World Tour Championship are returners. Being new to the sport, Cohen feels less pressure, but still plans to put up a fight and, more than anything, take it all in as a learning experience.

"For me it can't go wrong, it can only go awesome!" Cohen said. "I hoping to be a tough competitor, but even if I drag across the reef on my face, it's going to be fun and a great experience."

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Citizens speak up about the Cavalier Hotel

By Nathan Denny
Staff Writer

The Cavalier continues to be one of the big topics of discussion at City Hall.

At City Council's July 2 meeting, the members voted 7-1 (with 2 abstentions) in favor of developer Bruce Thompson preserving the Cavalier Hotel using city assistance.

Ever since the property was sold last month and a possibility of preservation was put on the table, the developers, city council and the public have engaged in numerous deliberations on what to do and how to do it.

Bruce Thompson, who bought the property, has proposed a development project that includes renovating the aging building and creating small housing developments on the open land surrounding the hotel. It was clear that the building, in its current condition, could not be saved without major renovations. Thompson's plan requires \$18 million of assistance from the city in order to save the "hotel on the hill."

Citizens Speak

Many citizens of Virginia Beach attended the city council meeting on July 2nd to speak on the issue of the Cavalier's preservation. The majority of the speakers wholeheartedly supported the building's preservation, recognizing that Virginia Beach already has a short list of iconic and historical buildings, and that one as prominent as the Cavalier deserves to remain standing.

One speaker, representing a local ar-



"Many citizens of Virginia Beach attended the city council meeting on July 2nd to speak on the issue of the Cavalier's preservation.

The majority of the speakers wholeheartedly supported the building's preservation, recognizing that Virginia Beach already has a short list of iconic and historical buildings, and that one as prominent as the Cavalier deserves to remain standing."

chitectural firm that has experience in historic preservation, said the city and the developer should seek a spot on the National Registry of Historic Places.

"The Cavalier is in rough shape, but it is very worthy," he said.

Another speaker was looking toward the future in her words to the council.

"We want the future generations to be able to catch a glimpse of our history."

A few speakers thought the city's money would be better spent elsewhere, and that the history associated with the Cavalier was not one warranting preservation.

Before the council went to vote, Councilman Glenn Davis, and House of Delegate candidate, of the Rose Hall district spoke on the economic value that has been underplayed in recent public discussions.

While the building's historical value is at the forefront of preservation opinions, the economic benefit to the city in its return value should be considered in the decision as well.

Davis said that the prospective return on investing in the hotel's renovation was conservative at best and expects a much bigger return than predicted.

With city council's moral and financial support, Thompson can begin to move forward with his proposed project.

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Isa Cohen

Isa Cohen from Chick's Beach competing in kite boarding tourney in Puerto Rico

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Cohen got involved with the KSP tour by chance while traveling around Oceania and the Pacific. During a trip to Vietnam, she met Kristin Boese, a world champion kiteboarder who happened to be in Vietnam running a "Kiteboarding for Girls" camp - an organization that empowers young girls through the sport of kiteboarding.

After meeting, Boese suggested that Cohen apply to the KSP ride tour. And not too much later, after several performances around the world, Cohen qualified and became the only woman to represent the

"Even if a drag my face across the reef, it's going to be fun." - Chick's Beach's Isa Cohen

Continental United States in this global competition.

In addition to the championship, Cohen is looking forward to the experience of visiting new places. She is excited to explore Puerto Rico and test the renowned surf in Maui.

Feeling at home in the water or on the

beach, Cohen is happy to call Virginia Beach home. A morning walk on the beach or a paddleboard trip with her dog, Bruce, are some of the "simple pleasures" that Cohen and her business, Tula, value as part of a balanced lifestyle.

"We are surrounded by water in Virginia Beach - all the water sports that I love are here," she said.

For more information on Tula Adventure Sports, visit www.tulasports.com.

For more information on the KSP World Tour Championships, visit www.kspworldtour.com.

Nathan Denny, 757-748-2898, njdenny@vt.edu.



Shown above from left to right are Nyah Love and Davion Mullen.

Parkway Elementary School - Christina L. Hutchins

Parkway Elementary School's second graders from Mrs. Marler's Class have been reviewing Economics concepts such as producers, consumers, goods, services, and resources. They took part in a factory activity where they produced Mrs. Marler's Tasty Candy Hamburgers. The students produced and delivered these goods (hamburgers) to some consumers in the school building. They made an assembly line like in a factory. The students are the human resources.

News of the Day

Trans. engineers hold conference

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answered questions from the attendees.

Nimmo receiving elevated water tank

As part of the city's water pump station and tank upgrade program, construction will begin on the Nimmo elevated water storage tank at 2173 Princess Anne Road. The construction bid totaled \$4.2 million.

The composite-style elevated tank will be constructed using the latest advancements in water tank construction, said Mary Hancock, a spokesperson in the city manager's office. The new tank is sized and designed to provide enhanced reliability in meeting the water service demands of nearby neighbors.

Work is set to begin this month and will take about 18 months to complete. The new tank will stank some 169 feet above the ground and will be similar in shape and color to the 29th Street water storage tank.

55th police academy class graduates

The Virginia Beach Police Department's Professional Development and Training Staff held graduation ceremonies for its 55th police recruit academy in late June at the Law Enforcement Training Academy on Birdneck Road.

Police Chief Jim Cervera addressed the class; guest speaker was Royce E. Curtain, special agent in-charge, FBI Norfolk Field Office. City Councilman Bob Dyer administered the oath of office and the Honorable Judge Stephen C. Mahan, of the Circuit Court, performed the swearing-in ceremony for the 23 new officers who exemplify the police department's core values: PRIDE – Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Dedication and Excellence).

Thalia dredge transfer facility almost done

The Thalia dredged material transfer facility project, located on Thalia Road

just off Virginia Beach Boulevard next to Thalia Elementary School, is 89 percent complete.

The concrete pier, concrete slab and approach slab have all been poured and the storm drainage system is finished.

All utilities, to include water, sewer and electricity, have been completed and the concrete curb and gutter work for the entrance road and parking lot are finished.

After the asphalt has been placed, the parking lot will be striped, followed by cleanup and demobilization. All work should be done by the end of July.

Resort area pumping station work underway

As part of the city's sanitary sewer master plan, work has begun on a new \$2.1 million sanitary sewer pumping station at 18th Street near Cypress Avenue. Construction completion is set for May 2014.

Once finished, it will be the city's largest sanitary sewer pump station, with an ultimate capacity of 3,400 gallons per minute.

The new pump station aims to help ensure reliable sanitary sewer service and provide added capacity within the service area.

Avis relocating

Avis Budget Group is relocating 17 positions from its headquarters in Parsippany, N.J., and creating eight new positions to be based in its Avis Budget Group's

Shared Services Center at 300 Centre Pointe Drive, near the intersection of Baxter Road and Independence Boulevard.

KOSTER expanding

KOSTER American Corp., is remodeling and expanding its existing facility at 2585 Aviator Drive in Oceana South Industrial Park.

The company, which makes waterproofing and construction materials, plans to invest \$3.1 million in building improvements and \$1.5 in land.

Smith replaces Morin

Dannette R. Smith is the city's new director of human services, replacing Bob Morin who resigned.

Merrill: "A real joy"

Superintendent James Merrill going back to North Carolina to run Wake County schools

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Merrill says that he is confident in the dedicated administration and staff of Virginia Beach schools, and knows that this school system will continue to be one of the best in the nation.

"I expect Virginia Beach schools to continue to grow," Merrill said. "The students will continue to perform better, will continue to close gaps, and Virginia Beach will maintain its great reputation and continue to recruit top-notch employees. People know about Virginia Beach. It is still a top school division. And I'm proud to have been a part of it."

Although Merrill has lived and worked many places, Virginia Beach is the city in which he was born. And after his time here as the superintendent, he has an even deeper connection to the city and

the people who make up the beach community.

"It is a wonderful place to work and live," Merrill said. "I've worked with some great, great people, who have class and a clear focus. Life is about relationships and it has been a real joy to be a part of this community."

The Virginia Beach City Public School system is the largest in Hampton Roads and the third largest in the state. It currently has over 68,000 students enrolled and 5,306 teachers employed at the 85 different schools.

It has consistently been ranked as one of the top large school systems in the country.

For more information on VBCPS and Dr. Merrill, visit www.vbschools.com.

Nathan Denny, 757-748-2898, njdenny@vt.edu.



Tina Person

-diligence, dedication, compassion, insight, perseverance, faith, and a deep love of family. . . Thank you, Miss Tina, for being such an inspirational member of the team who truly makes a difference!"

Miss Tina Makes A Difference at PAHS

Tina Person, night custodial at Princess Anne High School, recently received the school's I Make a Difference Award. These words were used when the award was passed to Person:

"If you need an energy pick-me-up or a dose of joy and exuberance at the end of a long school day, come on over to the upper-200 hall where you will find just what you've been looking for in the bright, ever-ready smile of Mrs. Tina Person, a member of our hard-working custodial night-crew! Conversing with Miss Tina even for a couple of minutes leaves one with a powerful impression of the beautiful qualities she embodies-

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Princess Anne High School Robotics Club triumphs in STEM annual competition

Princess Anne High School's Robotics team, led by Technology Education teacher, Roger Crider, found itself on May 31 again walking away with top honors in the city's annual competition.

The following article by junior Andrew Brightbill, originally appearing in PA's school newspaper, The Page, details the competition challenges:

PA Robotics Club teams placed first and second at the STEM Robotics Competition held at the Virginia Beach Convention Center May 31. Placing first in the Level 1 competition was Team Awesome 2.0 consisting of juniors Robert Schofield, Thomas Maulbeck and Adam Zelenka, and sophomore Long-Quan Pham. Placing second in the Level 2 competition was Team Organized Chaos with junior James Taylor and sophomore Peter Nguyen.



Team Awesome 2.0 with sponsors: Adam Zelenka (gr 11); Long-Quan Pham "Q" (gr 10); Roger Crider, Technology Education Teacher; Mr. Thomas

The competition is broken down into Level 1 and Level 2. The Level 1 challenge for this year was to build a robot that is able to dig through sand to get certain objects and to bring them back to a collection bin.

"This is particularly challenging," said junior Robert Schofield, "because we won't necessarily know where the objects are, and we just kind of have to dig for it." Also in the club are seniors Michael Bass, Chris Shelley and Connor Gannon, and juniors Josh Hofer, Maria Jernigan, and Ethan Thames.