

SVSU to host FIRST in Michigan statewide high school robotics competition

SVSU will welcome nearly 5,000 high school students from across Michigan for the statewide FIRST Robotics competition Wednesday, April 12 through Saturday, April 15. Including professional mentors and family members, an estimated 7,500 people will descend on the Great Lakes Bay Region for the competition, which is designed to inspire students to pursue careers in the STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and math.

"We are dedicated to growing the next generation of passionate STEM individuals," said Gail Alpert, president of FIRST in Michigan. "The robot is the vehicle we use to help them understand fields from mechanical engineering to computer science to business."

SVSU President Donald Bachand said housing the FIRST Robotics competition is a good fit for SVSU academically.

"We have highly determined students and faculty throughout our STEM disciplines, and they are winning national awards year after year," he said. "This provides our students and faculty with an opportunity to volunteer for the event and support these high school students. It also allows us to introduce our academic programs to a motivated group of

young people, including our specialized research and competitive opportunities that have received millions of dollars in private support over the past few years."

The competition will feature 160 high school teams, which average 30 students and four professional mentors per team. Practice sessions and robot repairs will take place in SVSU's field house, while competition events will be held in O'Neill Arena of the Ryder Center. Both facilities are part of SVSU's athletic complex.

FIRST Robotics teams that qualify for the state finals will arrive Wednesday, April 12 for inspection.

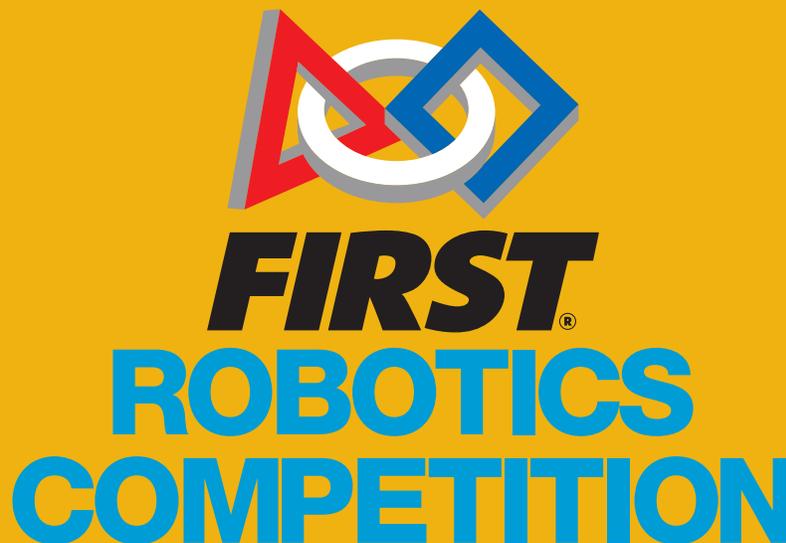
The qualifying rounds of competition will take place throughout the day Thursday, April 13 and Friday, April 14 with 40 teams in four separate divisions. A total of 32 teams will advance to the playoff rounds Saturday, April 15 with the champion crowned that afternoon.

In each round, three teams compete using autonomous and remote-controlled robots piloted by students, battling to earn points during a two-minute round.

"It's almost like an internship, because students are partnering with industry mentors," Alpert said. "Our students

learn through hands-on experience and problem solving. You don't get that in a lot of other high school competitions."

Leading regional employers such as The Dow Chemical Company and Nexteer Automotive are among the companies actively involved with FIRST Robotics, and a significant number of schools in the region field teams, including a first-year team from the Great Lakes Bay Early College at SVSU. For more information about FIRST in Michigan, visit firstinmichigan.org.



SVSU will need hundreds of faculty, staff, student and alumni volunteers over the course of the four-day FIRST Robotics event. Please watch your SVSU e-mail account for information on how to register as a volunteer.

The campus community can expect increased traffic volume, especially near the Ryder Center, from 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, April 12, and during the morning and evening of Thursday, April 13. FIRST Robotics personnel will not be parking on campus those two days; they will park on campus Friday, April 14 and Saturday, April 15.

Gerald Dennis

Technical Director • January Staff Member of the Month

In 2006, Jerry Dennis was cast in an SVSU theatre production as Jacob Marley, the tortured soul from “A Christmas Carol” who was damned to a ghostly afterlife as punishment for his greed and selfishness during his time on earth.

Dennis, having slipped on a patch of ice on his way to the performance, played two consecutive shows one evening with a condition that medical personnel — who he didn’t seek until after the final curtain call — determined was a concussion. The confusion, dizzy spells and vomiting between scenes might have provided Dennis with some evidence he needed medical attention. But that didn’t matter to him until after the audience was done with its applause.

“There’s a saying in theater: ‘The show’s the thing,’” Dennis said. “And it is. I got chewed out by the doctor for that one, though.”

Dennis has served as the theatre department’s technical director (and occasional cast member) for 16 years, but his love for the stage stretches back to his portrayal as a doctor in “Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates” in the fourth grade.

“It became like any other creative outlet,” he said. “You just have to do it.”

Not that Dennis hasn’t explored other professions. He worked as a meteorologist and oceanographer for both the U.S. Navy and National Weather Service, a butcher, and an optometrist. “I used to get very bored quickly,” he said. “This is the longest I’ve ever held one continuous job.”

He attributes the longevity at SVSU to the variety of artistic demands and the rapport between those working in the theatre department — from the long-serving faculty and staff to the rotating lineup of student actors.

The tasks they assign him fulfill his artistic needs. Most of his responsibilities involve designing and building sets and props for productions.

A few rooms behind the Malcolm Field Theatre for Performing Arts houses Dennis’ artistic space. Viewed out of context, some might mistake the room as the inside of an oversized garage, lined with furniture and tools, and floors stained by a rainbow of paint. The room, in reality, is the place where Dennis molds, carves and constructs many of the department’s visions into tangible things.

“I learn something new every single production,” Dennis said. “Every show has its unique challenges.”

And he enjoys each kind of challenge, he said. Even if, every once in a while, it means making the doctor angry.



Tammy Elliott

Special Assistant to the Provost • February Staff Member of the Month

There's a photo on the wall of Tammy Elliott's third floor Wickes office. In the foreground, there are trees and bushes, capped with white, untouched snow. Peeking out from a gap in the landscape is the red water tower that once stood tall on campus before it was removed in 2000.

"When I used to work at the Graphics Center, I would tell people they could find me by going to the building near the tower," said Elliott. "It stood out."

Much the same way as the tower once stood out for others, SVSU stood out from other higher education institutions for Elliott. As one of 136 seniors at Beaverton High School in 1989, nearly all of her college-bound classmates chose larger universities. Elliott wanted to take a route that seemed more adventurous; something that might allow her stand out from the rest.

"I wanted to try something different than what everyone else I knew was trying," she said. "It worked out for me. I haven't left since."

Despite her 28-years-and-counting stay with the university, she hasn't lost her appetite for challenging herself with new endeavors.

Elliott's undergraduate years were spent studying graphic design. By the time she graduated in May 1996 with

a bachelor's degree in the subject, she already had been hired for more than a year as a full-time employee in the Graphics Center.

Soon, though, she felt the itch for a new challenge. The same year she graduated, she was hired as the administrative secretary in University Communications. She retained that same title when she moved on to a new challenge in the College of Education in 2003 and then another new challenge in Academic Affairs in 2011. Along the way, she earned a master's degree in communication.

In Academic Affairs, Elliott worked in the same suite with Kristen Gregory, who retired in 2015. The opening presented another challenge for Elliott. She applied and was hired for the position that largely oversees faculty workloads and classroom scheduling.

Elliott's roles over the years have placed her in nearly every corner of campus — near landmarks that no longer exist, and in both buildings and offices long since re-named.

She keeps reminders of her travels on campus hanging on her wall, but never loses a sense of adventure for the road ahead.

"I'm always looking for a new challenge here," she said.





"We at SVSU mourn the passing of one of our most loyal and committed friends," said President Don Bachand, after learning of the death of Hugo "Ted" Braun Feb. 8 at age 84. Ted served on the SVSU Board of Control for eight years (1981-89) and was succeeded by his wife Ruth, who served for 16 years (1991-2007) and survives him.

The family has asked those wishing an expression of sympathy to consider the Braun Writing Awards at SVSU.

Professional Profile

- **Vanessa Brooks Herd**, associate professor of social work, was selected in January 2017 to join the Midland Rotary Vocational Training Team traveling to Muko, Uganda. Her training focuses on mental and physical wellness and child welfare issues.

- **Monika Dix**, associate professor of modern foreign languages, presented a paper titled "Buddhism and Musical Spaces: Sounding Off the Dharma" as part of the Soundscapes in Premodern Japan panel at the Modern Language Association Annual Conference in Philadelphia, Jan. 5-8. She also organized and chaired a panel titled "Literature as Experience of Crossing Boundaries in East Asia" at the same conference.

- **Julie Foss**, associate professor of modern foreign languages, represented the Michigan World Language Association at JNCL-NICLS' Language Advocacy Days and Delegate Assembly, Feb. 16-17 in Washington, D.C., where she visited the offices of Michigan U.S. senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters to advocate for legislation supporting language instruction. JNCL-NICLS is a non-profit education policy association representing more than 300,000 language professionals.

- **Joel Kiss**, assistant director of campus facilities, has received the Certified Educational Facilities Professional credential from APPA, the association dedicated to leadership in educational facilities. APPA's CEFP is the only certification that demonstrates the recipient's qualifications for educational facilities management and also demonstrates dedication to the educational facilities profession.

- **Dennis M. Savard**, assistant professor of criminal justice, had a paper titled "Delayed In-Custody Death Involving Excited Delirium" published in the *Journal of Correctional Health Care* (Issue 4, October 2017).

- **Matthew Zivich**, professor of art, is showing art works at Detroit's What Pipeline Gallery. The show, titled "Empires and Enclaves," includes four of Zivich's "architectural models" from the '80s, and the four "seascape" paintings made of household caulk completed from 2005 to 2009. What Pipeline is a 3-year-old privately-owned gallery that was recently selected by Artsy.com as one of the 16 most distinguished new art galleries in the world that has brought attention to the cities in which they are located. The opening reception was Feb. 10 and the show will continue until March 25.

New Cardinals

- **Kellie Brzezinski**, operations coordinator, announced the birth of a daughter, Peyton Marie (8 lbs., 8 oz.) Feb. 13.

- **William Mills**, systems administrator, announced the birth of a son, Jan. 30.

Condolences

- To **Kathy Henris**, administrative secretary, whose father-in-law, Howard James Henris, passed away Feb. 7.

- To **Connie Meier**, senior transfer credit clerk, whose father, James R. Coonan, passed away Feb. 17.

The Interior is published on the last Tuesday of each month for faculty and staff at SVSU. University departments sponsoring activities or events listed in the Interior will provide reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities when contacted at least three days in advance.

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