

G.A. Stetson Middle School's First Lego League Team "Robocalypse" Wins Regional Championship and in doing so, advances ERDG's initiative to engage the Pharmaceutical/Biomedical Industry behind the conservation of the World's Four Horseshoe Crab Species.



G. A. Stetson Middle School's [First Lego League](#) (FLL) team "Robocalypse" competed in the regional FLL competition at Patton Middle School in Kennet Square, PA on Saturday, December 17th. Out of 26 teams, Robocalypse won the Champion's Award, which represents first place overall for the competition!

FLL is a global STEM competition sponsored by

FIRST and the Lego company. There are over 30,000 teams in over 80 countries that are competing. This year's FLL theme is Animal Allies! Teams focused on animals and their relationships with humans. Within this theme, teams must identify a problem and offer a solution. Robocalypse focused on the conservation of horseshoe crabs.

Horseshoe crabs not only play a vital role in our ecosystem but have played a vital role in the pharmaceutical / biomedical industries for over 30 years. Their blood is used to produce endotoxin testing materials for many of the drugs and medical equipment we use, to assure that they are free of endotoxin contamination.

Here in the US, precautions are taken to harvest horseshoe crab blood sustainably, the animals are bled then released, but in Asia they are bled to death. If these unsustainable practices continue, this could result in the collapse of the Asian horseshoe crab population.

There are endotoxin detection producers who offer products produced in a sustainable manner as well as synthetic alternatives. Eli Lilly and Company, is the first pharmaceutical company to take a proactive position in conservation of the horseshoe crab through supply chain ethics, and is utilizing a synthetic alternative testing method throughout its global operations.

In identifying this problem, Robocalypse is the first group of students to partner with the [ERDG's](#) initiative to save the world's horseshoe crabs. Robocalypse's solution included educating their peers and community on horseshoe crabs. They collected over 500 signatures

on their petition urging 8 pharmaceutical companies to join ERDG's "Protecting Health" initiative and consider switching to one of the alternative endotoxin testing methods, as Eli Lilly and Company did and/or pledge to use only endotoxin detection materials produced in a sustainable manner. Robocalypse also sent out a press release to 8 media outlets alerting them to this critical issue. Robocalypse has received positive feedback from both pharmaceutical companies and the media.

As civic minded students and young conservationists, Robocalypse is affecting change in their world through education and activism! Robocalypse has been invited to compete in the FLL State Competition at UPENN on February 4, 2016.

For more information on ERDG's "Protecting Health" initiative, go to
<<http://www.horseshoecrab.org/med/med.html>>