

## North Oaks: 7 Chippewa Middle School boys vie for a Lego League world title.

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By Brady Gervais

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Pushkar Chaubal, 12, right, and Jacob Lindmark practice their presentation about reducing farm methane for the Lego League competition. (Pioneer Press: Scott Takushi)

On a recent afternoon, a group of students at Chippewa Middle School in North Oaks had to complete more than a dozen robot missions related to climate change.

And the clock was ticking.

Extract an ice core sample? Check. Ride a bicycle? Check. Turn off the lights? Check.

They were practicing for the FIRST Lego League world championship, which begins today in Atlanta. Their team, Hydrogen Peroxide, and dozens of others from across the globe will compete in robot and research challenges — using Lego toys throughout.

With a robot they've programmed, they will have to complete 13 missions in 2 1/2 minutes. They also will have to present their research on a climate problem in their community.

"I think what it does is provide a lot of background for engineering and the sciences," said Todd Gray, father of participant Taylor Gray.

The school is in the Mounds View school district.

The team — a group of seven boys — has been gathering three times a week since September, often in the Shoreview home of their coach, Greg Fiebiger. They spent months programming their robot, building attachments for it and coming up with a research topic: methane released by cows.

The theme of their research presentation is based on the TV show "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition." In their case, the team calls their project "Extreme Makeover: Farm Edition."

Decked out in hard hats, they talk about the effects of methane released by cows, how to reduce it and how to turn it into energy.

While they were studying methane, they visited two farms that were coming up with ways to reduce it.

The members of Team Hydrogen Peroxide consider themselves a neighborhood group. Though the team has the support of Chippewa Middle School, Lego League is not an official school activity and the team gets no money from the school. The students have to cover the costs of competition, Lego supplies and the robots.



Jay Goebel of Team Hydrogen Peroxide prepares the team's Lego robot to run through a series of tasks recently as the team practices for this week's Lego League competition in Atlanta. (Pioneer Press: Scott Takushi)

The students and their parents don't seem to mind, though. They say Lego League helps them in the classroom — and they think it will pay off later, too.

Kobi Endrezzi, 13, hopes researching methane will help his career prospects. He wants to be a biochemist.

Pushkar Chaubal, 12, said participating in Lego League helps him in school now. He said he's learning about public speaking, time management and research.

It might be years before the students realize the value of Lego League, said Fiebiger, a software engineer who had to learn on his own about technology and programming.

"I don't think they even realize what they've all learned," he said. "They're so young yet. Someday it'll soak in."

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#### ON THE WEB

Follow the North Oaks students on their blog during the FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Lego League World Festival today through Saturday at [hightechkidsblog.blogspot.com](http://hightechkidsblog.blogspot.com).



From left, Taylor Gray, 11, Jacob Lindmark, 12, and Jay Goebel, 13, of Team Hydrogen Peroxide work recently with their Lego robot in Shoreview for this week's Lego League world competition in Atlanta. The team members have to cover their own costs for the club. (Pioneer Press: Scott Takushi)

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