

## LOCAL SCHOOLS

How do you motivate students to think critically and develop stellar problem-solving skills?

# INTRODUCE THEM TO STEM



### CHRIST THE KING CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mesa, Ariz.

Pre-K-8

Est. 1964

Pastor:  
Reverend Rolyn Fransico

Principal:  
Shelley Conner

Cougars

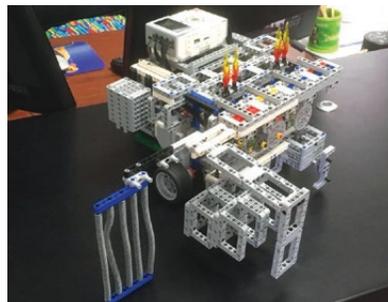
Blue and Gold

Led by volunteer Jason Hope, a senior structural engineer at Burns & McDonnell Engineering, and dedicated CTK father, the team qualified for the Arizona First Lego League State Championship tournament for the second time in 2017.

As the coach, Hope was impressed at the investment of time and energy from the students.

"Right from the beginning the students dove in with full force," he said. "They watched

### FIRST LEGO LEAGUE **CHRIST THE KING** REBELS FROM NABOO



YouTube videos to learn more about creating a robotics team and spent a lot of time researching, collaborating, and problem solving throughout the whole process."

"They even chose a team name they had a real passion for, 'The Rebels of Naboo,' from Star Wars. Between our team shirts and R2-D2 mascot, we leave a lasting impression everywhere we go!"

Currently the team is comprised of six students ranging in age from 11 to 14. The team has an equal number of girls and boys.

This year, at the state championship tournament, the CTK team won a Core Values Award based on their team culture and ability to work together and communicate to successfully complete a task.

"Half of the Rebel team members were given a pile of Legos and the other half was given the instructions to build the specified device. Their job was to communicate across a room and build the Lego object," said Hope. "I was so pleased at

their ability to work together without getting frustrated. Their months of hard work paid off right in front of my eyes. It was like they had their own language. They were just in the zone."

Robotics clubs are not cheap, but CTK has some great resources and donors that believe in the benefits of STEM at the middle school level. A grant from Salt River Project, and donations from companies like Compuflow Solutions and Burns & McDonnell Engineering each provided funding to support the program.

"I wish I had an outlet like this when I was a kid," said Hope. "I would tell other schools around Arizona that if you have a passion for STEM, step out of your comfort zone and create a club like ours. There are so many resources available. ASU even offers a workshop about how to coach a First Lego team!"



The CTK robotics club continues to grow, having added a second First Lego team to the roster with two new coaches. The club offers an elective class during the school day and this year, the class is instructed by students, including Hope's daughter, Savannah, under the watchful guidance of a CTK teacher. To get more students involved, the club is working on additional community outreach initiatives.