

## PRESS RELEASE

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# Clifton Middle Robotics Team Prevails at Netherlands Competition as Sole American Team

**MONROVIA** – Wearing American flag bandanas and tie-dye shirts decorated in red, white and blue, the Clifton Middle School robotics team known competitively as the Hippie Bots stunned an international field of high school and college students by winning the 2017 FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Dutch Open in Eindhoven, Netherlands on May 20 as the only competing American team.

Programming all the right moves and overcoming technical obstacles, the Hippie Bots maneuvered their way through the 45-team, 10-country field, completing the tournament undefeated and captaining the three-team alliance that took first prize.

“This win for our Clifton robotics team further demonstrates the commitment and dedication of our students and teachers to making their dreams a reality,” Monrovia Unified Board President Bryan Wong said. “We are all immensely proud of the Hippie Bots and their mentors for representing Monrovia Unified and this entire country.”

The Hippie Bots were also honored with the FIRST Tech Think Award, given to the team that best reflects the engineering design process, precisely detailing their strategies in an engineering notebook that included drawings documenting all stages of their robot design, and outlining what they have learned.

“The Hippie Bots win is merely the result of when talent meets hard, purposeful work,” Clifton social science teacher and robotics coach Paul Flores said. “This group knows how to work hard, be productive and still have fun in the process. The manner in which they conducted themselves as ambassadors for our nation would make any American proud.”

The Hippie Bots are one of 10 Monrovia Unified robotics teams that regularly compete in Southern California leagues sanctioned by FIRST Tech, a national nonprofit dedicated to inspiring young people to be leaders in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields.

In 2016, the Hippie Bots traveled to Shanghai, China for an international competition and used that experience to inform their strategy at the Dutch Open, even though the 2017 Hippie Bots team is made up of all rookie competitors. The Hippie Bots’ poise under pressure was a major factor in their victorious performances.

## MORE

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Inspire students to engage in meaningful learning in a safe and nurturing environment that embraces diversity.

Challenge students to be ethical, productive members and leaders of the community.

### OUR VISION

Our students will be ethical, compassionate individuals who:

- graduate from high school prepared for college and career,
- contribute and adapt to an ever-changing world by being resourceful and responsible citizens, and
- embrace diversity.

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“We had lots of challenges at the competition,” Clifton eighth-grader and team designer Zachary Szmkowski said. “Our phones were having connection issues and one side panel on the robot was too big, so we had to cut it down at the last minute with a hacksaw. But we overcame those obstacles and won the championship.”

The European trip was made possible with the tremendous support of the Monrovia community through a GoFundMe page supplementing a number of corporate sponsors who together raised more than \$27,000 to assist the middle schoolers in making the journey, spotlighting the hard work and dedication of MUSD STEM instructors and their students.

“Congratulations to Paul Flores and his robotics students for their inspiring victory in the Netherlands,” Monrovia Unified Superintendent Dr. Katherine Thorossian said. “Monrovia Unified is committed to fostering innovation in the classroom and making learning fun for every student. Through our District-wide participation in FTC robotics competitions, Monrovia is leading the way in the implementation of 21st-century technology.”

## PHOTO CAPTIONS

**060917\_MUSD\_HIPPIEBOTS1:** Clifton Middle School Hippie Bots robotics team members (in tie-dye at right) realize they won the 2017 FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Dutch Open in Eindhoven, Netherlands on May 20 during their final competition. As the only American team, the Hippie Bots maneuvered their way through the 45-team, 10-country field, completing the tournament undefeated, and captaining the three-team alliance that took first prize.

**060917\_MUSD\_HIPPIEBOTS2:** Clifton Middle School’s Hippie Bots robotics team receives the Think Award during the 2017 FIRST Tech Challenge (FTC) Dutch Open in Eindhoven, Netherlands on May 20 for best reflecting the engineering design process through its engineering notebooks.

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