TALON FAQ's

What different kinds of things do you do?
When Joining TALON 540 students can take on tasks in a variety of areas from CAD and build to PR and finance. Theses jobs include designing and maintaining the team's website, writing submissions for the various awards and grants offered through FIRST and other organizations, programming the robot, managing the team's budget, talking to sponsors and kids at other skills, taking and editing photos, building the robot itself, CAD the robot, the possibilities are endless. Every member of the team has the opportunity to learn or use skills in any of these areas. On of the goals of TALON 540 is to get students to use skills they already have and to learn a new skill.

What can you do other than build robots?
Outsides of building robots the TALON 540 is very active within the Greater Richmond, Godwin, and FIRST communities. We help out a the FIRST Lego League competition held annually at Maggie Walker Governor's School, assist with the set up, tear down, running , and participating in the "Robot Rumble" held at the State Fair of Virginia. In addition, three of our students helped with a FIRST Tech Challenge camp over the summer at the Virginia Commonwealth University. In the Richmond Community, we are involved with the Big Brothers Big Sisters Duck Race, Jake's Reindeer Race supporting the Maynard Foundation for Childhood Cancer, Engineering Explorers through Dominion Power, and many other community events. The team is active within Godwin High School. We take our competition robots, off-season projects such as "Lieutenant Shiny Sides" (Our T-shirt shooting robot), and demonstrate with them at various school events. We have shot off Lieutenant Shiny Sides at football games and pep rallies, we pied teachers with "Triton" (our 2007 competition robot), and demonstrated with "Talon" (Our 2008 competition robot) at the student-faculty basketball game. This year we are also implementing a "Go Green" week where we give students tips on how they can help protect the environment. On top of all of the community involvement, we also prototype and build offseason robots with any excess material we may have after the build season.

What is FIRST?
FIRST stands "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology." Dean Kamen, the inventor of the "Segway" and his college professor Woodie Flowers, started it in 1985. The main goal of the organization is to spread a love and knowledge of science and technology and teach students exactly what scientists and engineers do. FIRST also strives to build strong relationships between the teams and their communities.

What are the benefits of joining the robotics club?
Students learn skills that they can use in the real world. Students learn to polish writing skills, give a professional sounding presentation, manage finances, work within strict time constraints, build and design a robot. Members on the team learn to use CAD and other design software, as well as how to use the tools associated with building the robot.

How often do you meet?
Outside our main build season, we meet every Wednesday, after school, and during the

build, altering teams meet Monday through Thursday after school and most of the day on Saturdays.

What kind of robotics competitions does the TALON 540 compete in?
We compete in robotics competitions where the robots are used to complete various challenges specified in each year's manual. At the competition teams work in "alliances" of three to complete the challenge swiftly and effectively.

About how long does it take to build a robot?
Our build season is six weeks, but a robot can take a shorter amount of time to build, depending upon its complexity

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How long has the team been around for?
Team 540 has been up and running for nine years, and Mr. Hurlburt has been leading the team for three years.

How many competitions do you compete in each year?
We compete at the NASA/VCU Regional every year and on years when we are fortunate enough to have the opportunity we also compete at the Championship event in Atlanta, Georgia.

In what ways can parents get involved?
Parents can assist the team in a variety of ways from providing food to mentoring in a task of their expertise. We require the assistance of parents who have skills in the areas of CAD, Programming, Editing, Presenting, Building, and Designing.