The annual FIRST Robotics Competition is in full swing with some 60,000 high school students competing in regional challenges using robots they built in six weeks from a common kit of parts.

NASA science chief and former astronaut John Grunsfeld was at the DC Convention Center to help kick off Washington's regional competition when I was growing up there weren't programs like this where I could get with like-minded kids and we could work on a project together to build something great for me it was more question of surviving the process.
and still stayin interested in science

and it's so crucial today that we have

programs like this so that kids can grow

together to grow stronger and to help

our nation NASA is the largest sponsor

of the national first program supporting

five regional competitions and more than

280 teams the DC region includes high

school teams from Virginia Maryland

Washington and several other states

first stands for for inspiration and

recognition of Science and Technology

here's a look at some of the competition

from around the country since January
high school FIRST robotics teams across the country have worked tirelessly to build program and test robots in preparation for upcoming regional and national tournaments in Hampton Roads.

The NASA Knights and Triple Helix teams both sponsored by NASA Langley spent nights and weekends getting their 120-pound robot ready for this year's challenge called Rebound Rumble. What it basically is is shooting foam basketballs up in two basketball hoops that are arranged in a diamond pattern and add both ends of the field the higher.
baskets are worth more points

around 60 robotics teams competed in the Virginia regional tournament held at Virginia Commonwealth University's Siegel Center all with the hopes of making it to the national tournament in St. Louis this April this year's game presents a new challenges even for a seasoned team like the NASA Knights this year with a lot of neat challenges we actually got a vision tracking system working where we could use a camera and see where the backboard is and then judge read distance by the size of the backboard and smoother motors up
accordingly which is something we've never really done before and is really need to figure out how all that works both the nasa knights and triple helix feel confident about their robots and are looking forward to making it to Nationals I'm really excited I think we did really well this year and I'm looking forward to seeing how everything pans out FIRST Robotics is not only fun but offers students real engineering experience and may inspire them to pursue careers in STEM I had no idea what I wanted to be before I joined the
team but now I want to be a chemistry major so and I would have been interested in chemistry but if not for robotics I probably wouldn't have ever considered it as a career sponsored by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory xxi Los Angeles regional first competition at the Long Beach Convention Center matched 66 high school teams from not only California and Nevada but also Brazil and Chile I learned so much because I basically already wanted to go into engineering so I just learned so much about robotics and so many many other
mechanics about it we were running out of time towards the end we had to work a few all-nighters just don't leave schools stay there all night just to get it done but we ended up getting it all done I learned a lot of technical skills like how to program in C++ and also just how to work with a lot of different types of people we've had AP students we've had credit division students everybody working together everybody's contributed it hasn't been just the top everyone's had a good idea that we've implemented into the robot so
that's been really cool I had so much fun I learned how to communicate I learned how to build a robot I learned how to problem-solve and get things done really quickly well like learning how to apply the math and science I've learned since I was a little kid there's the best thing ever students from 49 teams and six states competed for top honors during the 2012 FIRST Robotics Bayu regional competition and Kenner Louisiana as strong supporters of first NASA and the Stennis Space Center provided coaches mentors judges and other volunteers a team from
David Thibodeau Career & Technical High School in Lafayette Louisiana joined a pair of teams from Texas to survive three rounds of competition and emerge as tournament champion. Meanwhile, the team representing North Shore High School and the St. Tammany School Board in Slidell Louisiana walked away with the regional Chairman's Award for best partnership exemplifying the true meaning of First. Director Bob Cabana joined Kennedy Space Center engineers at the first regional competition at the University of Central.
Florida in Orlando teams from more than 60 high schools including several from the Dominican Republic and Australia competed in the KSC sponsored event and more than 1,500 high school students competed in the 11th annual Buckeye Regional FIRST Robotics Competition at Cleveland State University's Wolstein Center the events 60 teams represented schools and community organizations in Ohio Canada Maryland New York and Pennsylvania Glenn Research Center engineers and scientists volunteered as technical participants and mentors to
the students the winners of these regional competitions will meet at the first championships April 25th through 28th at the Edward Jones Dome in Saint Louis some 51 thousand students on more than 2,400 teams are expected to vie the first program was founded by inventor and entrepreneur Dean Kaman in 1989 to inspire student interest in science and engineering through the building of robots stay tuned to NASA television and check-out nasa.gov and the NASA television youtube site for more FIRST robotics action involving a NASA Center
near you