

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Elena Christian JHS Robotics Team Beats Central, Other Competitors At Regional Competition

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ST. CROIX -- Before they traveled to the annual U.S. Navy National SeaPerch Challenge in Louisiana approximately [one year ago](#), the Elena Christian Junior High School SeaPerch Robotics Team had to fend off contenders in the regional competition, beating out local schools like Good Hope Country Day.

On Saturday morning, facing three schools -- C-TEC at the Educational Complex, Central High School and the John H. Woodson Junior High School -- E.C.J.H.S. came out on top again, and thereby secured their all-expenses-paid trip, sponsored for by the Virgin Islands Department of Education, to this year's Navy competition, which takes place in Atlanta, Georgia.

The St. Thomas-St. John District has its own regional event, with the winning team from there joining E.C.J.H.S. in Atlanta.

The weekend competition took place at the Frederiksted Pool, as the teams worked to overcome challenges with their robots, including obstacle course and a puzzle challenge, among others. The E.C.J.H.S. SeaPerch team, which includes students who are also part of the school's [Rocketry Club](#), had 15 practices before the competition, according to adviser Steven Bullock.

"With this, the more you practice, the better you become," said Mr. Bullock. "The coaches can't do it for them. The coaches can be good, but take for example athletics, the athlete has to do the work because the coaches can't do it for them."

The team's captain, Garvin Douglas, again stepped up to the challenge to lead his teammates to victory, with guidance from coach Stephanie Bullock.

Joseph Chada, the Navy's educational specialist who serves as the liaison between the Navy and the schools in the territory, praised the students for their efforts.

"I think it's fantastic," he said. "It's growing every year and we intend to grow it even more." He said part of the Navy's goal in hosting the robotic events is to promote the importance of science and the critical part it plays in protecting the nation. "We have become so technical that the old days of somebody coming in [the Navy] with a high school diploma are slim to none," he said. "Now we're looking for advance technical education in each and every field, and particularly now with the world we're in."

Mr. Chada also highlighted what he deemed as endless job opportunities that become available following a six-year term at the Navy, including careers beginning at "well over a \$100,000."

In a twist this year, event organizers have allowed the first runner-up teams in both districts to make the trip to the finals, according to Mr. Bullock, although they will have to pay their way, and won't be allowed to compete.