

Education is taken to the X-STREAM at annual competition

By **PATRICK J. BUECHI**
Staff Reporter

Thieves were caught, mice were trapped, and apples were baked. The activities in this year's X-STREAM Games certainly kept the kids busy.

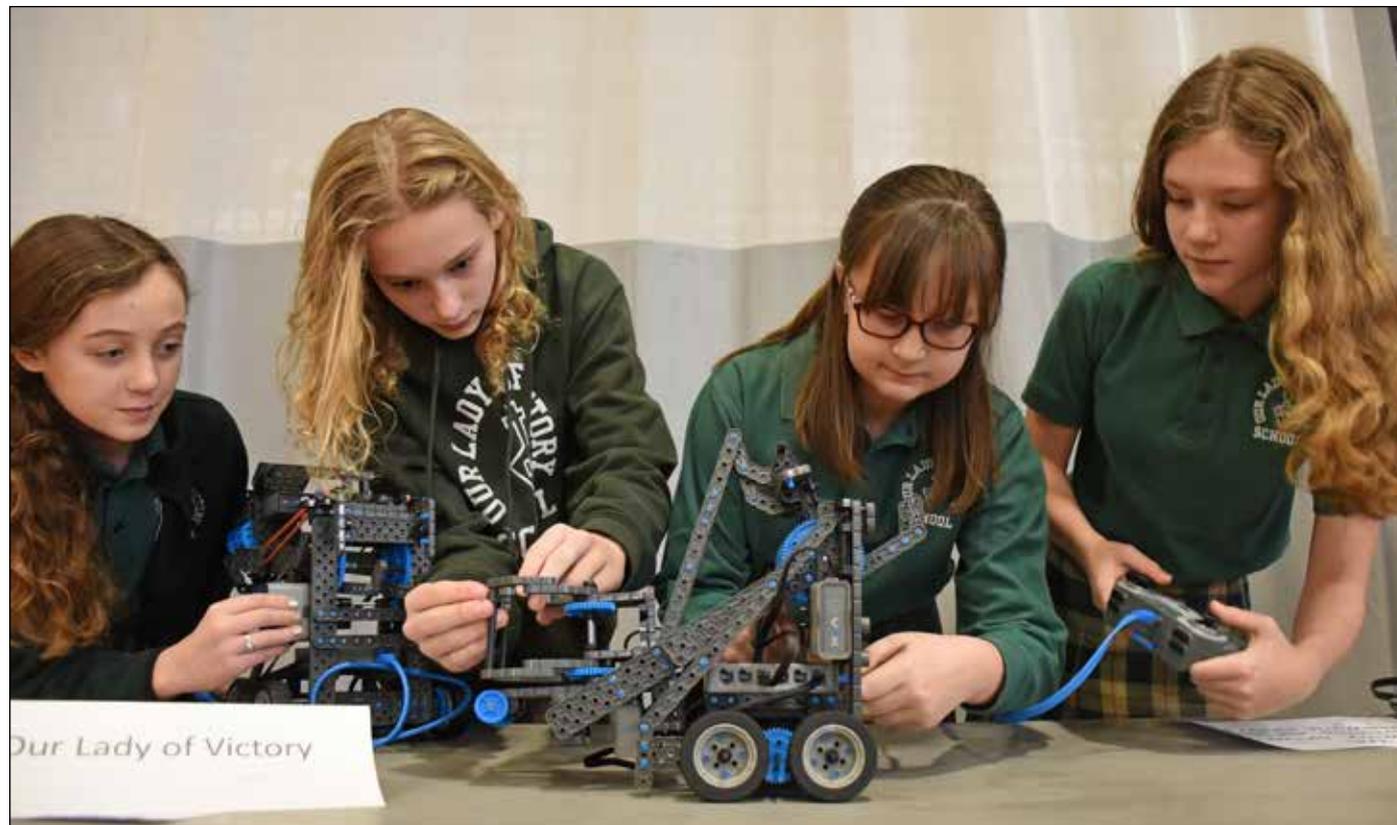
The annual competition, held Dec. 7 at St. Joseph Collegiate Institute, pitted Catholic elementary schools against one another in several science, technology, engineering, religious, artistic and mathematical projects from acting to robotics to baking.

"The X-STREAM Games put into action what our children are learning in their STREAM curriculum in all of our schools. It gives them an opportunity to see how math, science and technology work together to be able to create things," explained Michael LaFever, superintendent of Catholic Education for the Buffalo Diocese. "It's an opportunity for them to also understand that they have to work together as team members to bring that all together."

New this year was a Makerspace, a free space where kids could create whatever they wanted from provided materials.

"Makerspace is just the idea of putting lots of materials out so kids could just create things, allowing them to use their imaginations," explained Shelly Reidy, coordinator of professional development for the diocesan Catholic Education Division. "That was a very big success. It was great for siblings or kids who were waiting for what they were there for."

This year also marked the first



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Students from Our Lady of Victory School; Ryan Geary, Sophia Judasz, Kendall Markiewicz and Maeve McMatty put the finishing touches on their robot at St. Joseph Collegiate Institute during the annual X-STREAM competition.

Rube Goldberg Academy. Based on the work of the 20th-century engineer and cartoonist, students had to solve a problem by designing a contraption that performed a function in four, not necessarily, easy steps.

"Using the design process the kiddos would first come up with a problem to solve. Today's problem was how do we trap a mouse. Then we have to put four pieces together to solve that problem to trap the mouse," explained Tracy Ficorilli,

STREAM coordinator at St. Andrew's Country Day School, Kenmore. "We had fun with it. We worked on a lot of problems throughout the year. The kids used the journaling process to come up with their own problems to solve. How would they feed their dogs without getting out of the chair?"

Through the STREAM Academy sessions where students practiced for the competition, they learned the design process, journaling, and most important, teamwork.

Other competitions included Lights, Camera, Action, where students had an opportunity to express themselves through the use of short plays, monologues, song and improvisation. Students also had the chance to turn crime solver at a CSI experience, where they put their knowledge of forensics science to use to solve a mystery. Robotics, always a favorite, drew 25 teams competing to build and control small mechanical workers to stack boxes.

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The STREAM program works with the creative part of a student's brain

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Throughout the Kenmore high school, displays from other academies such as Circuit Cubes, Fab Fashion and Lego Academy were on display.

STREAM was introduced into the diocesan elementary schools five years ago. The curriculum is designed to make kids think and deduce, to use trial and error to attempt something new, and to learn

from their mistakes and push on until they succeed.

The STREAM program works well for kids who may not be the most book smart, to use the creative parts of their brains to figure problems out.

"Kids have lots of different types of intelligence and lots of ways that they're strong in. School kind of limits it, very narrow. X-STREAM Games allows lots of kids to shine with lots of talents and gifts," said

Reidy.

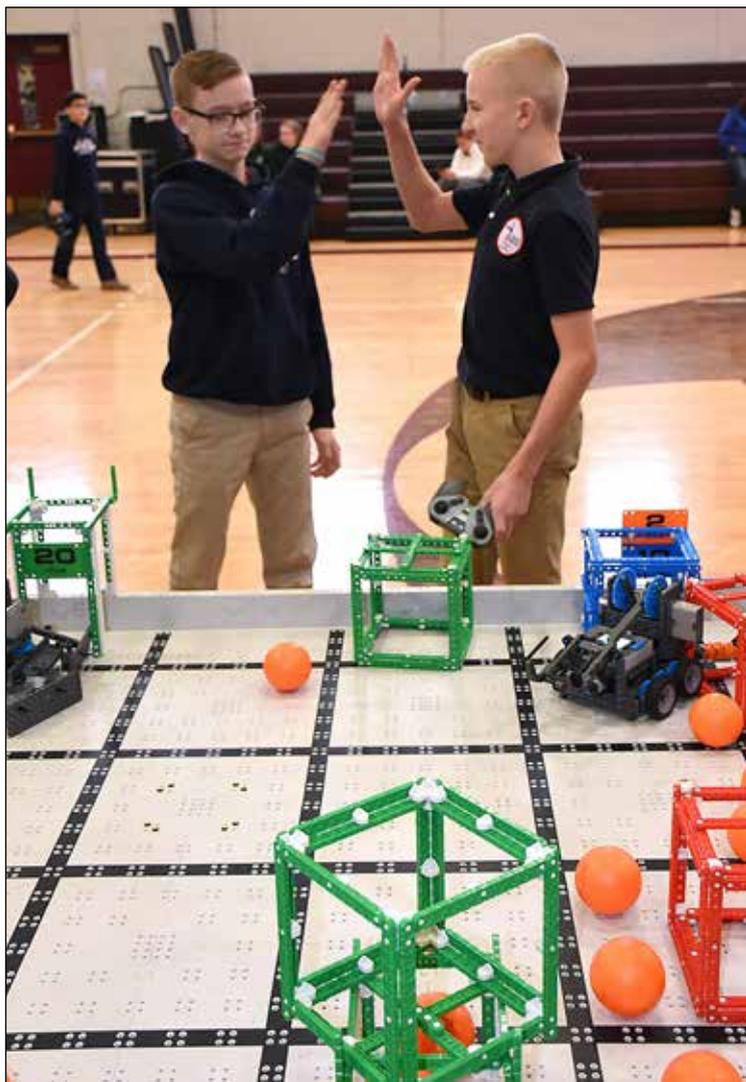
Along with STREAM curriculum in 28 diocesan schools, STREAM Academies, which focus on one specific area of study, are used as after-school programs. Several schools have brought those academies into the regular school day once a week.

"One school did (academies) Monday morning and they found they reduced their absenteeism on

Monday significantly," said Reidy.

Some schools have created their own academies with specific programs that interest the teachers and students, such as drama clubs and sewing clubs.

"When they start to create it on their own, that means they own it and it's not something that's being pushed on them, but they're wanting to make it happen. That means it's been successful," said Reidy.



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(Above) Seventh-graders from St. Mary's School in Lancaster; Ethan Bookmiller and Evan Smith high five after receiving one of the higher scores in the robotics competition at the X-STREAM Games at St. Joseph Collegiate Institute.

(Upper right) Fifth-graders from St. Peter and Paul School, Emma Paa and Brianna Adamczyk look over the patriotic blankets they created. The students will donate the "Warm Wishes" to area veterans.

(Right) Students from schools throughout Western New York gathered at St. Joseph Collegiate Institute for the annual X-STREAM competition.

