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featured

Middle schoolers race RC cars at Yuma ABEC's DRIVE in the Desert competition

By Nick Fenley Sun Staff Writer
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RC cars race on the track (above), while the RC car travels the terrain (right).

Photos by Nick Fenley/Yuma Sun

The Yuma Arizona Business and Education Coalition (Yuma ABEC) held its fifth DRIVE in the Desert event on Dec. 1, at the Sunrise RC Speedway, located near 4415 W. 18th St.

Nine middle schools throughout Yuma County participated in the event, and a total of 39 teams competed.

Rusty Tyndall, the Director of Strategic Partnerships for Yuma ABEC and Southwest Technical Education District of Yuma (STEDY), provided some background on the festivities.



“We have two races a year, and each race is the culminating activity of a semester-long exploration into the automotive industry. Students have curriculum that has been provided by Yuma ABEC. So, they study all about the car industry – and just as a little extra incentive, they get to race the RC cars.”

“We’ve got nine schools that are participating, and 39 teams,” Tyndall continued. “Each team has a driver and support crew that will be participating, and it should be a lot of fun.”

The festivities kicked off with a race between administrators from the participating schools in order to get the crowd going, and Luis Reyes of Southwest Junior High School was the first winner of the day.

Afterward, the student races began, with teams being classified into seven different heats. Notably, the roster featured fun team names, including “Pavement Princess” (Centennial Middle School), “Wontons” (Ron Watson Middle School), and “TECHno Bros” (Gowan Science Academy).

As the RC cars zoomed around the track and crashed into the boundaries, turn marshals were on the scene to assist with vehicles in need. With plenty of flips and crashes, the turn marshals kept busy!

Fast Eddie – owner of Fast Eddie’s RC Hobbies, located at 1617 S 4th Ave. in Yuma – served as the master of ceremonies and operated the technical side of the event. He explained that the competition is set up to serve as the students’ “big prize” at the end of the semester.

“It’s the culminating event for the semester for the middle school. They take what they’ve learned over the last several months, and this is kind of their big prize.”

Shara Castro, a teacher at Centennial Middle School, further detailed the learning opportunities that the experience affords.

“They’ve been learning about different automotive careers and the educational pathway to getting to different career fields. They take care of the cars, so if something breaks, they have to look up how to fix it. We’ll order the parts, and they’ll fix it themselves,” she shared. “They’ve learned how to do quite a bit of the maintenance on the cars and just take care of them. They get to have fun, though.”

At the end of the competition, Gowan Science Academy’s “The Jack of All Trades” claimed first place. Second place went to “Harrison and the Hendersons” (Gowan Science Academy), while the “Bolts” (Crane Middle School) won third place.

Nick Fenley