

THE blarney stone

A PUBLICATION FOR THE COMMUNITY
OF NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY SCHOOL
AND MARIST ACADEMY



Balancing academics and athletics

NDPMA students excel at keeping up with sports and studies

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy prides itself on always being an institution of both high academic achievement and athletic excellence. And the school seems to have found the secret to maintaining the right balance between the two. As evidence, ND Prep athletes have averaged a 3.62 grade point average over the past six years and numerous teams have repeatedly earned academic all-state honors, including volleyball and softball, which have been so honored every year since the school opened in 1994.

For the 2007-08 school year, seven teams—hockey, volleyball, girls basketball, boys ski (first in state GPA), girls ski (third in state GPA), softball (first in division GPA), and girls tennis—were named academic all state. So far this year, boys tennis (fifth consecutive year), volleyball, and cheerleading (first in state GPA) have been given such honors.

In fact, ND Prep teams have earned academic all-state honors more often than any other schools in the Catholic High School League, according to NDPMA athletic director Betty Wroubel.

“Every year, two or three of our teams end up being in the top three GPAs in Michigan in their sport,” she said. That is phenomenal. These kids are taking eight classes, many with other extracurriculars, some even in band!”

STANDING ON FIRM GROUND

On why the school has always done so well, Wroubel said, “I attribute this directly to Fr. Leon for standing on firm ground,



Notre Dame Prep's softball teams have earned academic all-state honors every year since the school opened in 1994. Volleyball shares that record.

putting the overall mission of the school first and foremost, without compromise. Also, Father has surrounded himself with administrators who have fully bought into this. We really believe the mission of the school is the common thread of everything we do. Building good, Christian people and leaders, not just good athletes and championships. We want good leaders down the road.”

Though she says there is a ton of kids who have thrived after graduation from ND Prep, Wroubel cites as an example, Jeff Schuele, who graduated in 2005.

“Jeff currently is attending the U.S. Naval Academy. But at NDP, he played football, lacrosse and wrestled, and did well academically. He is a good example of going on and doing very well in college,” she said. “He juggled a very busy athletic career and maintained a high grade-point average at NDP and is now doing extremely well in Annapolis. But he's just one example of many. I really can't think of any of our athletes who have failed to continue their success in college.”

Schuele played football and wrestled for Navy. He will graduate in May with a degree in ocean engineering.

TEACHING LIFE LESSONS

At NDPMA, as well as at every other school, balancing academics, athletics and good sportsmanship provides challenges for all—administrators, teachers, coaches, and especially, the students.

According to Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA)—a nonprofit organization founded at Stanford University in 1998 and dedicated to using sports to teach life lessons through positive coaching—schools that create or strengthen a culture that promotes academics, good behavior and values for players, coaches and parents do so for a number of reasons, despite a strong win-at-all-costs mentality present today in youth sports. These schools give athletes a better overall experience, get parents and coaches on the same page about what it means to

See Student-athlete, page 3

Notre Dame Preparatory School and Marist Academy provides its economically diverse student body a religiously transformative and internationally recognized college-preparatory experience of lasting value.

Man of the world

Dan Brickley graduated from Notre Dame Prep in 2006. Since then he has seen much of the world as he continues his studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Dan slowed down recently to answer a few questions from The Blarney Stone.

What are you currently studying and where? And why did you choose this field of study?

I am majoring in biology and environmental studies with a minor in German. I actually chose this major based on my senior year at NDP. I always thought that I wanted to study political science or international relations until I took Mrs. Yaroch's AP environmental science class. Once I realized how interesting this subject was to me and how I could actually handle some of the science and math that I traditionally shied away from, I decided to investigate it more once I got to the University of Pennsylvania. There, I fell in love with my biology classes and am managing to major in that, too.

After five years of taking German with Mrs. Archer at NDPMA, I didn't want to just stop once I got to college. A minor, plus a year abroad in Munich, Germany, has been the perfect fit. I'm currently in Munich studying at Ludwig-Maximilian-Universität. I'm lucky, too, that I chose German. Germany is one of the most environmentally friendly countries in the world—I look out my window every day and see green roofs!

Notre Dame Prep alum Dan Brickley in Bavaria.

What made you choose Penn?

When I first put Penn on my list, I really considered it a long shot. The admission requirements were high and I wasn't sure how I could deal with being so far away from home. But once I visited campus, I knew I could stay there. Penn's gorgeous, green campus is right in the middle of a thriving Philadelphia neighborhood, minutes away from an exciting downtown. The myriad of academic programs and ability to study abroad interested me, too.

What are some other ways you are involved at Penn? Have you had any interesting experiences?

On campus in the U.S., I wrote for the Penn school newspaper for a while before deciding to try and start my own organization. Although the process is on hold while I am abroad, I'm excited to return and continue to work on getting more U.S. State Department visitors to come to Penn when visiting Philadelphia.

Here in Europe, the interesting experiences are unending. I'm doing triathlon training with other students in Munich. In February, I spent the entire month working on an organic farm in former East Germany. Afterwards, I visited a new friend at his home in Budapest. And I just got back from three weeks in Spain and Portugal doing a portion of the Way of St.

James, a pilgrimage to the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela.

Are there other programs you have been involved in?

Last summer, I had the amazing opportunity to join the Penn biology department on a research expedition to Mongolia. We flew into the capital of Ulaanbaatar, met up with the Mongolian side of our research team, and then took a seven-hour plane/SUV/boat ride to reach our field site in northern Mongolia. For 17 days we researched the effects of climate change in the region, specifically looking at how plants and the traditional nomadic culture of the Mongolians were adapting to rapid changes.



ND Prep alum Dan Brickley on the Great Wall of China.

What has been the most challenging thing about your college experience thus far?

As anybody who knew me at NDP knows, I had a pretty firm "social studies mind set." Since I was convinced that I would not be majoring in biology, I didn't take the classes (AP biology, calculus, etc.) that would have prepared me for such a course of study. Switching over to a critically thinking, scientific major hasn't been easy, but I still think that I couldn't have done it without the basis NDP gave me.

Can you offer any advice for current NDP students who would like to study abroad?

First of all, keep studying a foreign language for your whole four years. It can be tempting to stop when subjunctive and adjective endings get so confusing (and Chinese characters for NDP-ers nowadays!), but it really pays off in the end. Knowing German has brought me to Germany three times already, and since I can speak the language, I've lived the culture and met the people in a way normal tourists never can.

Second, don't be afraid to reach out of your comfort zone and look for opportunities outside of what you would traditionally be expected to do. Although people don't usually study abroad in high school, I talked to Frau Archer about wanting to

go to Germany, and she found a perfect program during the summer months.

Do you feel that Notre Dame Prep prepared you for life after high school? In what ways?

The idea of stewardship, which was well taught at NDP, is probably a big reason I am studying environmental science. I think the ethics taught and the discussions sparked in the religion classes also continue to have a positive impact on me.

I also have to give props to NDP's English curriculum. I felt much better prepared as a writer than many of my peers once I got to Penn.

Was there a certain teacher who inspired you in a special way?

Mrs. Yaroch and Frau Archer obviously had big effects on me. They made learning for their classes interesting and fun—so much so that I keep doing it today.

I think Mrs. Derico's English classes did more than teach me writing skills, too. Her selection of non-fiction not only inspired a lot of us, but got us thinking about important issues and topics.

What do you see as the value of your NDP education and of Catholic education in general?

NDP's tight-knit community really helped me through the toughest stages of adolescence and it well positioned me for exciting future endeavors.

The biggest benefit of a Catholic education is that students and teachers can speak openly about issues that are so important to today's society. Whether we were discussing gay marriage or bias in newspapers, God and religion could always be a part of the conversation. As I increasingly learn, in the real world, these are important issues that can't simply be ignored.

What are your hopes, dreams and aspirations?

I'd really like to enter the workforce in some way after college, whether it be environmental business consulting or Teach for America. A few years later, perhaps I'll even have the privilege to get married! Eventually, I would like to come back to Michigan, too. 🇺🇸

Student-athlete, from page 1

“honor the game,” increase the ability to recruit and retain coaches and volunteers, and most importantly, develop a sports program that reinforces the educational mission of the school.

With academics, PCA says that the research is clear: when parents, coaches and teachers work together, a child tends to do better in school.

NDPMA A.D. Wroubel agrees and adds that balancing the needs of the student with the needs of the athlete is sometimes a tricky issue. Each sport has minimum



ND Prep alum and current U.S. Naval Academy student Jeff Schuele is shown blocking a Johns Hopkins University player. Schuele, who wrestled and played football and lacrosse at NDP, was named 1st-team, all-conference as a junior and senior for Navy.

academic standards that have to be met. These are driven primarily by the various coaches associations. But according to Wroubel, the school has much more stringent criteria that have to be met in order for a student to play sports.

ACADEMICS HIGHEST PRIORITY

“Our standards are much stricter than the state,” she said. “But one of the initiatives we’ve taken in the last three years and on which assistant principal Donna Kotzan has done a phenomenal job, is tutor the kids—bringing them in on a regular basis and emphasizing the importance of staying on track. The leadership of Donna has been phenomenal. She does a great job of monitoring the kids, especially if or when they may slip below their potential.

“We all agree that first and foremost academic performance is the highest priority,” Wroubel said. “We go out of our way to make sure that coaches know when one of their players may be struggling in school. We have guidelines in place designed to keep the focus on the student. It makes no sense to have a student spend extra time on the playing field when he or she may need that time to catch up on his or her class work.”

For many students, however, handling

the rigors of academics and sports—sometimes multiple sports—may not be a problem. In fact, the Michigan High School Athletic Association (MHSAA) says that when certain types of athletes play only one sport during the year, they may lack the additional enrichment and experience of participating in other sports or activities. In a media release, MHSAA says that single-sport-focused athletes sometimes find that participation is no longer fun and eventually drop out of their “chosen” sport because of the actions of overzealous coaches or pushy parents.

According to MHSAA, playing more than one sport offers more than what most people see on the surface—kids playing games four to five days a week. For families, multi-sports offer more opportunities to be together away from work or school. Often—at critical times in their lives—playing multiple sports offers kids more than one way to connect with each other and work toward common goals.

Helping student-athletes thrive also is a focus of the Detroit area’s Catholic High School League. Each year, the CHSL presents scholar-athlete leader awards to students in more than 20 sports. Wroubel says that 25 Notre Dame Prep athletes have earned the award since the school opened in 1994. 🇺🇸

DID YOU KNOW?

“High school athletes have higher grades and lower dropout rates and attend college more often than non-athletes.”

(Minnesota State High School League)

“By a 2-to-1 margin for males and a 3-to-1 margin for females, student-athletes do better in school, do not drop out and have a better chance to get through college.”

(University of Chicago)

“The one yardstick to predict 'success' in later life (self-satisfaction and participation in a variety of community activities two years after college) is achievement in school activities.”

(College Testing Service)

“95 percent of Fortune 500 executives in the 80s and 90s participated in school athletics.”

(FORTUNE Magazine)

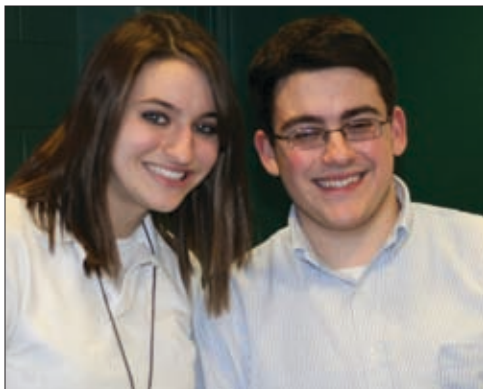
Students host pro-life conference at Pontiac campus

Rock music, dancing and energetic discussion motivated attendees; NDP organizers take strong stance on issue

Notre Dame Prep students, along with many other Catholic high school and college students from southeast Michigan, hosted a dynamic conference for more than 200 of their peers that was unabashedly Catholic and powerfully pro-life.

The sixth annual Building Bridges to a Culture of Life conference, under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe, took place on Saturday, April 25, at NDPMA's Pontiac campus. "Life Will Triumph!," taken from Pope Benedict XVI's recent letter "Dignitas Personae," was this year's theme, inspired by Pope John Paul II's reminder, "Joy and true progress are on the side of life. God, who loves life and gives it generously, is on the side of life."

Building Bridges to a Culture of Life is a vehicle where mainly Catholic youth, dedicated to educating other youth about the value of life, work to build a network of peers ready to defend the dignity of every life from conception to natural death. Building Bridges primarily accomplishes these goals through their annual pro-life youth conferences such as the one held on April 25th at NDPMA Pontiac. It is



Notre Dame Prep seniors Lauren Rao and Matt Orlando led the school's coordination of the Building Bridges to a Culture of Life conference.

LIFE

will triumph

organized by young people for the young people and mentored by an adult advisory board.

Conference planners attracted a broad range of students this year with



Building Bridges to a Culture of Life has sponsored conferences in each of the past five years.

three tracks of participation for kids from 8th grade through college. Workshop choices included, "We Shall Overcome," educating on abortion; "We Will Lead," a leadership-training seminar sharing concrete projects for youth; and "We Are Convinced," which presented bioethics and freedom-of-conscience legislation to integrate faith into a pro-life framework for making life's decisions.

ND Prep senior Lauren Rao, one of the planners of the event, said, "Those attending also received a t-shirt, a dinner, a *Bella* movie DVD (*Bella* is an independently produced film released in 2006 that depicts the powerful issues and choices facing an unmarried pregnant woman); dancing lessons and a concert. For \$15 presale or \$20 at the door, it was a great deal for all that stuff."

She said that the speakers all were wonderful and the music was great, too.

"One of the musical acts was a local band called Obsidian Crush," said Rao. "They are more of an alternative rock band. And we also had a Christian rock band called The Undeserving, headlining our concert. They are out of Toledo, Ohio."

Speakers on hand for the event included Jennifer Miller, Executive Director of Bioethics International, who talked about how bioethics can help the dignity of life flourish in the future of healthcare. Jason Jones, the founder of The Great Campaign and co-producer of the feature film *Bella*, shared strategies on building



Brian of Obsidian Crush. The band played at the Building Bridges to a Culture of Life conference at ND Prep.

a culture of life from his lifetime of human rights activism. And Christina Condit, a University of Dayton student, brought the uplifting message "Chastity. It's More Than Possible!" Finally, Sean Carney, national director of the 40 Days for Life spring campaign, inspired those present with his message, "What You do Matters."

Commenting on the organizing process for this year's event, Rao said that the planning was both fun and a commitment. "Planners met every Sunday and it's been even more work than

See Conference, next page



MYP COORDINATOR HEADING TO PUERTO RICO

Brenda Kambakhsh, MYP Coordinator of the middle division, was recently chosen to be one of 30 participants from across the Americas to be trained in the IB Academy this summer in Puerto Rico. The IB Academy provides intensive training to prepare participants to become IB workshop leaders. Workshop leaders play a key role in professional development outreach.

The IB teacher-training faculty is responsible for training approximately 18,000 teachers and administrators each year. In addition, participants are trained to take on two formal roles (authorization site visitors and consultants) related to the authorization of IB World Schools.

Open to participants from across the Americas, teachers and coordinators were selected from Brazil to Argentina, Vancouver to Michigan for the IB Academy this year. The training will take place June 18-22 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Conference, from page 4

school, especially during the past couple of months,” said Rao. “But because I’m a second-semester senior, fortunately I had the time. I’d been doing so much lately for the conference, it’s almost driven me to the point of insanity,” she said. “But it was so rewarding in the end!”

Matt Orlando, a Notre Dame Prep senior, who also helped organize the conference, added that his strong feelings on the right-to-life movement inspired him to take a more active role. “The only way we can be truly free is when we truly respect life from conception to death,” said Orlando. “It’s so essential to get that message out—especially to the youth. Kids will be the influencers in the future and there are so many who are brainwashed in a culture that says it’s limiting someone’s freedom if you restrict abortion. I don’t buy that for a minute! You need to respect life. That is the heart of Jesus’ message and the heart of the Catholic message.”

Even the speakers were amazed at the initiative of the youth involved in this year’s event. Michelle Yax, Executive Director of the Problem Pregnancy Center, has spoken at the conference three times before and described the participants as “passionately pro-life.”

“These teens are dedicated to educating other youth about the value of life and building networks among their peers to support and equip each other to go out into the world and make a difference,” Yax said.

Planners Rao and Orlando hope that all who attended took away a renewed commitment to the cause of pro-life. When asked about how they can convince those who still may be pro-choice or “fence sitters,” each had strong feelings.

“Conferences like this are a good

start,” said Rao. “There was even another conference like ours going on the same day, a little south of us. Also, there are many books on the issue—many that our youth group has read. Education is key!

“Breaking down the debate into its various facets also helps,” she added. “One part of the abortion debate centers on cases of rape. But only one percent of abortions occur because of rape. On the other hand, the latest figures I’ve seen is

it’s the unborn, the elderly, or normal people—you or me—adults, students, whoever. People sometimes don’t respect each other. And that’s at the root of this. If you respect someone and if you truly love someone, love your neighbor as yourself, as Christ commanded us, we won’t have unwanted children.”

Fr. Maciej Pawlowski, SM, a school chaplain at ND Prep and the moderator of the school’s local pro-life youth group

The Champions for Life, said it was gratifying to see so many young people engaged and passionate about pro-life.

“Here at school there is a vibrant pro-life club,” he said. “The Champions for Life are students who actively promote and proclaim the culture of life every day. And that is not an easy task in today’s teenage world. But I am very proud of them!”

Summing up the whole Building Bridges experience, Lauren Rao said she really hopes that someone

at the conference might look at her or another planner and say, “Hey, they’re working so hard on a whole conference based on their views. And maybe other young people will then think and begin to adopt the same views. Maybe they’ll want to be as strong as all of us are.”

“And turn to prayer!” added Matt Orlando. “That is our greatest strength.”



Christian rock band The Underserving headlined the Building Bridges to a Culture of Life conference at ND Prep.

that 60-70 percent or more of all abortions actually happen because the child is simply unwanted,” said Rao. “And those are statistics! Saying things like that are powerful in this debate. We need to point these things out. We need to make people aware that an overwhelming majority of abortions occur simply because a child is unwanted.”

Orlando reiterated the point that a lot of it stems from a lack of respect. “Society in general and with many pro-choice Catholics in particular, there is a lack of respect for human life whether

Chinese acrobats visit middle division



Part of International Baccalaureate focus on cultural diversity

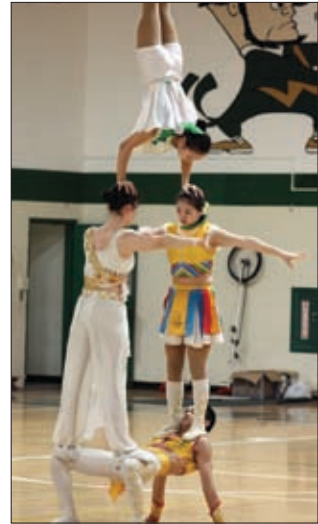
Four acrobats from Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province in China, visited the Pontiac campus recently and performed feats of balance, flexibility, co-ordination and strength for Notre Dame Marist Academy's 6th through 8th graders.

The visit in March by the Fabulous Chinese Acrobats was especially relevant to NDMA students. As part of the school's preparation for its IB Middle Years Programme authorization, it has begun teaching Mandarin as one of its foreign-language offerings.

This professional troupe of acrobats was accompanied by an interpreter who helped enrich the performance with fascinating information about Chinese culture, customs, history and school life.

The talented athletes tumbled and flipped, twisted and turned, demonstrating for the kids how practice, concentration and hard work turn their bodies into moving works of art for the kids, who thought the experience was unforgettable and breathtaking.

Sandy Favrow, principal of the middle division added, "We were very excited (to have the acrobats visit) because it was so appropriate given our preparations for IB authorization. Intercultural Awareness is one of the key concepts of the Middle Years Programme. After enjoying the Chinese acrobats presentation, our students had a better understanding of one of the classic portrayals of their culture," she said. 🇨🇳



Left: Acrobats from the Chinese troupe Fabulous Chinese Acrobats performed on March 16 for middle-school students at Notre Dame Marist Academy in Pontiac.
Above: The acrobats form a human pyramid.

Summer camp aids children coping with cancer in the family

2008 NDP graduates help out at college-student-run camp for children who have a parent with cancer

There are 1.4 million cancer cases a year in the United States that affect individuals and their families. The support generally is there for grown-ups, but the special emotional needs of children of adult cancer patients have been overlooked. Simply put: kids are often left to deal with these personal tragedies on their own—and if parents themselves are struggling with illness, their sons and daughters frequently miss the simple joys of childhood.

NDP 2008 graduates and current UM students Gianna Maria Guzzardo and Stephanie Dal Bianco are involved in a program that addresses this issue.

Camp Kesem is an annual college-

student-run summer camp for children who have or had a parent with cancer and where campers build self-esteem and gain support from peers facing similar challenges.

This year it will be held August 9-14 at Camp Copneconic in Fenton, Mich.

“The purpose of Camp Kesem is to build a supportive community for the greater Detroit-area families coping with



cancer,” said Guzzardo. “Our camp is envisioned, developed and organized by students at the University of Michigan and Michigan State University. It is completely free for all families.”

Camp Kesem is open to all Detroit-area and mid-Michigan children between the ages of 6-13 who have been affected by cancer in their families, regardless of financial status.

More information available at www.campkesem.org.



Shown left to right: visiting German student Lukas Heinzer, NDP students Nick Vaillancourt and Julie Ramus, and German student Antonie Blumenthal.

German students visit high school

Notre Dame Prep's German Honor Society welcomed guest students from Germany on March 26. Lukas Heinzer of Gemünden/Wohra, and Antonie Blumenthal of Hosenfeld-Hainzeu (cities near Frankfurt, Germany) spent four weeks with their NDP host siblings, Nick Vaillancourt and Julie Ramus, respectively.

The German students enjoyed learning about American culture and schools, as well as making new friends. While at school, Lukas and Antonie observed and monitored various courses and

helped NDP students taking German classes better understand the language and culture of Germany.

This visit was coordinated through the Friendship Connection exchange program. Friendship Connection was developed in 1981 by high school teachers in Ohio and Germany, with the goal of establishing an ongoing and inexpensive alternative to the higher priced national exchange programs. Last year, close to 200 high schools in the U.S. participated in the program. ND Prep has participated since 2003.



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School web site: ndpma.org

A higher grade of learning



Sr. Sue Sattler, an IHM sister and a Detroit attorney specializing in nonprofit organizational development, is shown with Notre Dame Marist Academy students at the Waterford campus. On March 5th, Sr. Sue talked to the school's junior kindergarteners, kindergarteners, first graders and second graders about the three Rs of being green: recycling, reusing and reducing. She also discussed how she helped with the "greening" of the IHM Motherhouse in Monroe.


Lower division earns Emerald School status

Fighting Irish go green in Waterford; campus in Pontiac named a Green School

Notre Dame Marist Academy's lower division has been certified as an official Michigan Emerald School for the 2008-2009 school year. This is the second year in a row for the school and it's one of only 32 schools in Oakland County with such a certification. The award is given each year by the Michigan Green Schools Foundation to schools that meet certain environmental criteria. This is the second year in a row that ND Marist Academy has been named an Emerald School.

NDPMA's Pontiac campus also was

named a Michigan Green School by the foundation, meaning the campus achieved at least 10 of 20 energy-saving and environmental tasks.

Michigan Green Schools Foundation is a non-profit agency dedicated to assisting all Michigan schools achieve environmental goals, including protecting the air, land, water and animals of the state and the teaching of educational stewardship of students pre-kindergarten through senior high school. 

ND PREP ROBOTICS TEAM WINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD WITH RARE ALL-GIRL DRIVE TEAM

Notre Dame Prep's Killer Bees robotics team earned the 2009 Regional Chairman's Award at the Kettering University Robotics District Competition held March 7 in Flint. Instrumental in winning the event's most prestigious honor were robot drivers and Prep seniors Sarah Huston and Carla Spicuzzi. The award is given to the team that best exemplifies a blend of technological skill, entrepreneurial enthusiasm and community service,

Jim Doyle, ND Prep teacher and team moderator, said that Huston and Spicuzzi are the first girls team in 14 years to pilot ND Prep's robot in the competition. "We are very proud of Sarah and Carla," he said.

Also, congratulations go to Killer Bees mentor Jim Zondag, a Chrysler engineer, for winning the 2008 Great Lakes Regional Woodie Flowers Award, which recognizes teachers and mentors who lead, inspire, and empower students in science, engineering and technology.



Seniors Carla Spicuzzi, left, and Sarah Huston are at the controls of the school's robot entry during competition at the Robotics District Competition in Flint.