St. Augustine’s pupils get an early Christmas gift

Santa’s little helper Marty was on hand to deliver early Christmas prizes to a team of pupils from St Augustine’s RC High School, who were crowned winners of a battle of robots competition – Marty’s Coding Party 2018.

The inaugural city-wide contest, which was aimed at late primary to early secondary pupils, was launched by partners the City of Edinburgh Council and CGI, through their Community Benefits Fund, and was aimed at encouraging children in Edinburgh’s schools to get more involved in coding. The partners worked with Edinburgh-based robotics startup, Robotical, who have developed Marty the Robot, a fully-programmable, wifi-enabled walking robot.

The hotly contested final saw teams programme their Marty to complete an obstacle course and a dance-off. The team of four girls and one boy from St Augustine’s RC High School, based in the West of Edinburgh, emerged as overall winners and received £1,000 to spend on IT equipment for their school.

The school opted for a 3D printer and Nintendo Switch which were presented to them yesterday (Tuesday 18 December) by the City of Edinburgh Council Education Vice Convener Cllr Alison Dickie, John Wordsworth-Goodram, Delivery and Transformation Lead at CGI and Marty’s inventor Dr Sandy Enoch.

Cllr. Alison Dickie said: “I was delighted to be here today to present these wonderful prizes to this year’s champions. “Learning to code and using digital technologies is

increasingly becoming an important part of today's school curriculum and introducing children to these subjects in a fun and engaging way will surely help open the door to some young people considering robotics and coding as a career for the future."

Winning team from St Augustine's RC High School

John Wordsworth-Goodram, Delivery and Transformation Lead at CGI said: "Hiring and developing local talent is key to CGI's client proximity model, so it's in our interest to ensure that Scotland has a digitally skilled workforce for the future. By encouraging children to get involved in a fun as well as educational way, we hope that we will see more young people considering IT as a valuable career option that is full of opportunity.

"Through our modern apprenticeship schemes we are committed to providing opportunities for young people and I definitely spotted a lot of potential in these finalists."

St Augustine's computing science teacher Steven Moore explained their prize selection: "We include video game playing and development in various parts of the curriculum, so the Nintendo Switch will directly support this.

"However, computing is increasingly becoming something that we touch and wear, and we're interested in exploring Nintendo's Labo products and using the 3D printer to allow pupils to design and build computing devices in conjunction with the Micro:bit and Raspberry Pi devices that we already have in school.

"It's similar to Marty, the pupils really respond positively when they can physically see the results of their programming, rather than it being a more abstract concept within the computer."

Sandy Enoch, CEO and Founder at Robotical, said: "I was

astounded by how good the teams were and how professional! It was great to see them all supporting each other and deciding on our prize-winners was very difficult. Marty has been developed to promote creativity and learning and acts as an entryway into computer sciences so it has been great to see the excitement from the schools.

“We live in a world where technology is all around us, and this is only going to increase. Whether we are talking about robot vacuum cleaners or self-driving cars, it’s really important that everyone knows a bit about how the world around them works. Through this competition I hope pupils who might not normally engage in STEM subjects gain a better understanding of the potential of robotics and coding.”

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Winning team with their prizes

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