VEX Online Competition

Girl Powered: In Her Words Storybook Challenge

“Little Architect”

When I was little, I would proudly dress up in big princess gowns. The material was itchy and the glitter never washed off of my skin, but they truly did make me feel like royalty. Something else that made me feel like royalty was when my mom would take me to her house showings. It sounds strange, to feel like a princess while walking the halls of a completely empty, mid-size house, but I loved it. My mom called me her Little Architect. Going to my mom’s showings at such a young age sparked a love for math and design that hasn’t gone away. Joining robotics my freshman year was one of the best decisions of my life. I made great new friends and established a basis in engineering, design, and programming that not only boosted my self-confidence but will help me in whatever profession I choose to pursue.

I have always had an interest in math and science. Every career I have ever had an interest in has been a STEM career: doctor, engineer, architect, astronaut, etc. The fact that I discovered robotics in high school was practically fate. There was some doubt when I first joined- not from me, but from friends. I was one of two girls in the class, and none of my friends understood why I was taking an elective that “actually required doing work.” I didn’t care about the work, though. I loved it.

Towards the end of the year, there was a class competition where we had to build a bot that climbed up a steep board. It sounds like an extremely easy challenge, but it was rather difficult. My partner and I worked for weeks trying to construct the perfect robot. It was practically weightless, with tape wrapped around the wheels and a perfect gear ratio. In the end, I chose to make a drastic design change. We ended up coming in second place. This moment was one moment I will never forget in robotics because in that challenge I proved to myself that I could do it. I didn’t have to be a boy to excel in a field that is mostly male-dominated, I just had to believe in myself.

I’m not going to lie though, it was extremely overwhelming at first. Going from knowing absolutely nothing about robotics to being in a room with people who had been interested in it their whole lives was a bit of a shock. Just like any subject, however, you can get the hang of it as you go along. Just because robotics has a male majority does not mean that your ideas and your designs are not just as good. Sometimes you will find yourself having to speak louder or stand on your tiptoes just to be seen or heard, but my hope is that someday we won’t, that someday the ratio of 2 girls to 21 boys will be equal.

During my journey in STEM, I have learned so much. Not just in academics, but also about myself. My teachers, classmates, parents, family, friends, and role models have all pushed me to stay on this track no matter how scary it seems. Even if you are the only girl in class and feel little and intimidated, you shouldn’t be. Women are just as qualified as men in STEM fields and should not be dissuaded to pursue them. My advice to girls wondering if they should join robotics or TSA or First: do it. Even if it’s scary, even if you feel underestimated and little, you can do it. You can do it and you can win, as long as you never stop believing in yourself along the way.