



The Girls of 8828B

JANUARY 2017



The entire team of Blue Streak Robotics

We, the girls of Team 8828B, have been doing this for a long time. We've seen a lot, and learned a lot, and had to deal with our fair share of workplace inequality. Despite our setbacks, we wouldn't change a thing; our trials have made us prepared, strong, and ready to take over the world, one robot at a time.



When Blue Streak Robotics began back in 2013, there were only two girls in the entire robotics program. Both of them happened to join 8828B, and with some work, they managed to convince some of their friends that robotics was a worthwhile activity. All it took to persuade their friends to join VEX was simple human contact, a shared passion, a valued friendship; in other words, a leader to look up to. If we can get those leaders to take the leap, join, and make a difference, then others will follow. However, finding those leaders is where we have to concentrate our efforts.



As one of those leaders, I can say that working in technology has been both incredibly rewarding and exceedingly frustrating. Our trials are significant, but they make our ultimate successes more gratifying. For example, we've all had to deal with the fact that there are simply more men in engineering than women; in many of our high-school engineering classes, there are only about five girls in each class of 30 students. This discrepancy between the genders is the reason that women are absent in the workplace, and I believe that promoting STEM in schools will shrink the gap. These difficulties make our success in those classes, such as Principles of Engineering, incredibly rewarding.



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This season, 8828B secured a place in the State Championship at our first competition in Rome. We won the Design Award, which is given to the team that demonstrates a superior design process and Engineers' Notebook. While the rest of our team worked on our robot, a female member of my team and I spent hours on the Notebook, organizing our sketches, printing off the rule-book, and taking responsibility for the records of our meetings. In the end, it wasn't our robot that carried us to States; rather, it was the girls who worked on the aspect of our team that no one else thought to focus on. It showed me that even the most underappreciated of roles can make a difference, and that everyone, no matter their gender, is important.



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Learning, building, and designing are all integral parts of our program, and as we learn to overcome our difficulties, we learn to value ourselves and our resilience. This is where the empowerment and self-reliance portion comes in; if we can teach these traits to girls entering the workforce, we'll benefit from their ideas, knowledge, and unique abilities. Being truly Girl-Powered means tapping the female half of the population for their talent, encouraging their ascension into positions of power, and offering them opportunities for success. As a female member of this team, I can confidently say that we've done an exceptionally good job of making our voices heard.

Our ultimate goal this year is to make it to the World Competition in Kentucky. My friends and I have been entering every online challenge that we can, so if our robot fails we can carry our team to victory. One thing I've learned about failure is that you need to have backup plans, and it's fitting that the girls of our team are covering our bases and making sure that we have multiple shots at our goal.

After all, we're the ones who catch what the others miss; without us, our team wouldn't be as successful as we are today.



TEAM 8828B, BLUE STREAK ROBOTICS

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