Girl Power Throughout the Years: My Story

Most of my life, I have been very insistent on what I did in my school life, and most of the time my parents were okay with my decisions, never forcing me to do something that I did not want to do. But the one time my parents forced me to join a club, robotics, might be the best thing that has ever happened to me. I started way back in fourth grade with my horizons teacher, Mrs. Phillips, as the coach. She and her positive charisma encouraged me to join robotics in the first place and got me hooked on building, designing, and programming. Without her, I would not of joined this amazing community and would of become a completely different person. One thing I love about Mrs. Phillips is that the team she composed was so diverse, including people of all genders, grade levels, and races. I learned to work and problem solve with others that had different ways of thinking and became exposed to proper teamwork and gracious professionalism. After elementary school ended, I had to leave my wonderful coach, but I continued to work on robots and improve my engineering skills.

In middle school, I started VEX robotics. Most of the people who were in my elementary school's team had quit, and as a result, I was stuck with a group of nearly all new people and all guys. The first year was rough, but as we started to get better I became more confident in my abilities and in my teamwork skills. However, I hadn't realized that just because I was able to

assimilate into a team with all guys, they were ready to assimilate into a team that contained a girl. My eighth grade year is what I consider to be my most successful year thus far, yet it came with many obstacles that oriented around my gender. I realized that many of the boys in competition would not talk to me when it was time to strategize matches and instead opted to talk to the other boys in my team. I assumed it was because they did not feel comfortable talking to a girl, but that still did not stop me from feeling left out. I started to have negative comments said about me by people in my team, and that's when I **realized** I had to prove myself.

As the main programmer, I dedicated all of my free time into robotics and would even bring the robot home to work on programming. Our robot performed great in the fields of autonomous and 1 minute skills programming (back when skills were seperated). Eventually, our robot scored the highest programming skills in all of the world for middle school and high school, and we won first place at the worlds competition for programming skills. All this work was initially meant to prove myself to my teammates, but in the end, I realized that I shouldn't feel the need to prove myself to people, and instead I should work on improving my skills for myself and because I want to.

Now that I'm in high school, I have started to gained more experience in leadership through robotics by becoming the team leader as well as continuing to be the main programmer. As the only girl that is in VEX robotics at my school, I've been working on including more girls into the program. I want our school's teams to become more diverse and to get more girls interested in STEM and the amazing opportunities it has to offer. I believe that having a girl on a robotics team allows everyone to gain a new perspective on designs, problem solving, and even life in general.

So what does girl powered mean to me? It means girls can do anything as long as they set their mind to it, and old-fashioned stereotypes should not stop them from achieving their dreams. People should focus on what someone has to offer instead of what they were born as.

Credits
By: Sophia Tran
Team: 1961 U
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