



“He Said, She Said.”

Written by Kate Steinhorst and VRC Team 5509B, The VHS Knights

How?

BEEP. It was over. My hands flung up to cover my mouth in disbelief. The VHS Crusaders (the eighth alliance, facing the first) won State. That was when I realized that regardless status in the competition, any team can pull through. Any *person* can pull through as well. No matter who you are, your race, abilities, mental challenges, physical challenges, weaknesses, strengths, gender, or anything else, you can succeed in VEX. And that's a truth we as students and members of STEM need to be constantly promoting and living out.



Introduction

That story explains my experience at the 2016-2017 Wisconsin State Competition. Hi, my name is Kate. Meet my teammates: (below: left to right) Caleb, Isaac, Ben, AJ, and Jack. In this short story we'll be telling my story—*our story*—relating to diversity.



My Story:

I had no interest in robotics until I attended State and Worlds with my brother's team. That's where the first sparks went off. At State I became fascinated with coding and how the robots were made/operated. At Worlds, I remember hearing the raw passion for robotics in students' voices; The hours of work, sweat, blood, and tears they put into their success. Astonished that people could care so much and work so hard on something I considered to be "for nerds", I was told no one knows much about robotics before they join. I joined that fall. It's been an adventure of self-doubt, perseverance, and proving myself, but it's all been worth it.

Girl Powered Event Experience:

I attended the amazing 2017 Girl Powered Event at Vex Worlds in Louisville, Kentucky. Several female STEM leaders sat down on stage and talked to us, making me believe I could do anything and the truth is that *we* can, just like any guy. If we want to learn a new programming language, we can. If we want to become engineers or invent things, we can. If we want to become STEM leaders in our field, we can.

If you asked me who my role model is, I would say any one of those women who inspired us that day. They have taught me that anyone is capable of greatness.

Girl  Powered

How does having a girl on the team affect the way your team functions?

HE SAID:

"Kate keeps us in line." - Jack

"Kate is crazy, but in a good way. She is detail oriented which is good since she leads the notebook and helps clean the code so there aren't any typos." -AJ

"On the thought of chemistry in the team, all guys want to be on their best behavior when they're around a girl. So, the team has less horse play and goofing off among the guys. Kate is very note/goal orientated. Everything must have a due date and if we did not have Kate then we would not have such good goals/Engineering Notebook. Us guys are just happy to slap something together and get it done however with a girl, she keeps amazing records." -Isaac

SHE SAID:

I think they treat me just like all the other guys in the house.



How have we taken initiative to create a more inclusive environment that attracts a diverse group of students?

He said:

"We have opened the program to the entire VHS community." -Ben

She said:

Our team advertises robotics to our entire organization, regardless of age, gender, race, or anything else of the sort. We believe that anyone can join robotics and be phenomenal at it.

The VHS Squires, Knights, and Crusaders:



How we believe diversity of perspective changes our robot design, our team chemistry, and even our ability to succeed?

He said:

"More diversity, more options, more viewpoints, more thought processes." -AJ

"I know that in my observations girls tend to stick with something reliable, whereas guys lean towards something riskier. Together, we even it out. On the thought of ability to succeed we have a better chance to succeed because different genders bring different perspectives to a team." -Isaac

She said:

Let's make something clear. I'm not team leader because I'm a girl. Honestly, the decision shocked me. This is my second year in robotics, but the other boys on the team have had 4-7 years of experience. This is because girls truly bring different skill sets and thinking to robotics.



How has each member tried various roles on the team?

He said:

"Each member leads a certain part of our team. This doesn't mean that person does all the work for that section. When deadlines are close, the whole team will work on that section to finish it. When we follow and trust this system, we have more fun and don't end up yelling at each other." -Caleb

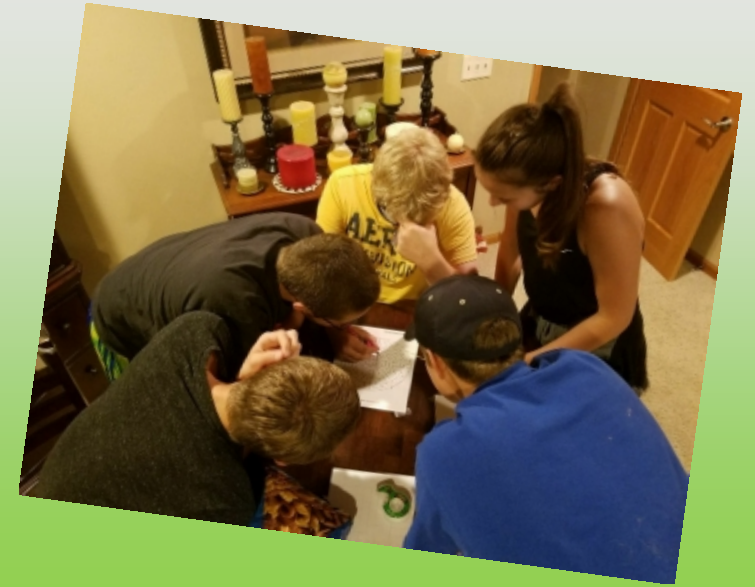
"I've been involved in CAD, Hardware, and the Engineering Notebook." -Jack

Sometimes you'll love new tasks or roles. Sometimes you won't.

"I tried hardware and literally went insane. I'm the head of software and I led the notebook for a week." -AJ

"For instance, I have been a driver, builder, and involved in CAD." -Ben

"Each member of the team has tried various roles and it really help each other to appreciate what others do on this team." -Isaac

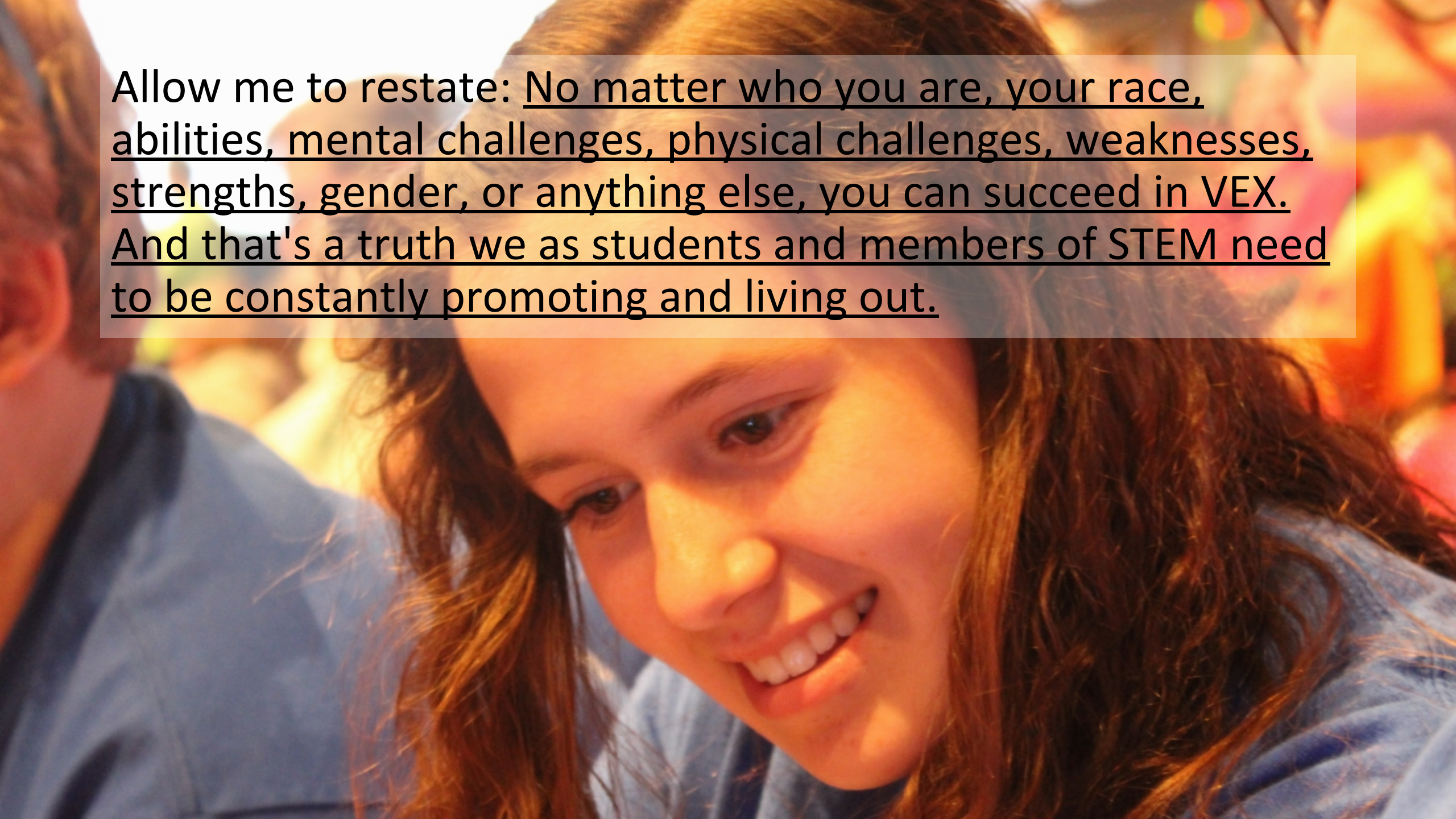


She said:

We push each member to try every role on the team. If you don't try it, you'll never know if you like it or not. I personally have tried Hardware, Software, Online Challenges, the Engineering Notebook, and Scouting.



BUILDING A ROBOT ISN'T ONLY FOR BOYS!



Allow me to restate: No matter who you are, your race, abilities, mental challenges, physical challenges, weaknesses, strengths, gender, or anything else, you can succeed in VEX. And that's a truth we as students and members of STEM need to be constantly promoting and living out.

"Strength lies in differences, not in similarities."
- Stephen Covey

