

“We Can Do It!”

Team 224S

The phrase “Girl Powered” inspires ideas of ambition and pride in the Malibu High School Robotics Team’s work. The girls in our team take this idea and apply it through every aspect of our robotics: from how we approach problems, to our communication, and even how we express our ideas, we’ve found ways to take this sense of ambition and express ourselves in a mostly male environment. Our team is unique in that many teams at co-ed schools consist of mostly boys, but ours is the opposite. Compared to the 2 boys, we have 5 girls on our team. This was not an accident, as 3 junior aged girls on our team have been actively campaigning for other girls to join since middle school. As our team is an after-school club, there are a lot of hours we have to put in, and therefore it was very difficult to recruit girls, even if they expressed interest. Even girls who like robotics were afraid of what joining the Robotics Team will do to their reputation. However, through several years of relentlessly pursuing our interest in robotics, we have destroyed stereotypes on our campus about girls on the Robotics Team. Our team will continue recruiting girls with similar interests in the STEM field. Our unique perspectives as girls in STEM allow us to incorporate innovative ideas and diverse skill sets into our team while maintaining our more-typically female interests. For example, Jessica’s background in coding doesn’t interfere with her love for makeup, and although Annie has been taking apart engines her whole life, she also takes interest in cooking.

Even though many girls, including these, love STEM, three years ago, there wasn’t a single girl on the Malibu High Robotics Team. However, today Annie codes for a robot that Lauren built. Emma takes into account Jessica’s ideas when building the robot she and Ava designed. Within these three years, these five girls have taken the initiative to pursue their interests in the STEM field by overcoming their individual challenges and devoting their time and energy to robotics. However, this was not always the case.

Once upon a time, 2012, there were 3 friends: Ava, Lauren, and Jessica. They were slightly awkward, slightly smaller, 12-year-olds who were very different. Yet one thing they shared was their intense passion for STEM.



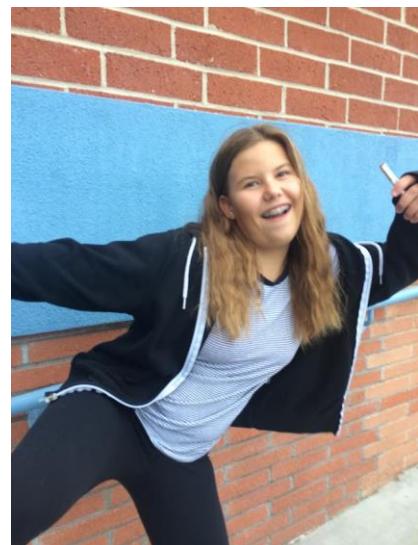
Jessica had just transferred to Malibu Middle School. Eager to prove herself, she was loud, involved, and some would say overbearing.



Ava was only 12, yet felt the same stress levels as a 30-year-old CEO, so she kept to herself. She kept her head down and did her work, no personal attachments whatsoever.



Lauren was a makeup fanatic, who did what she wanted and didn't care what others thought of her. She would say and do anything she wanted because of her confidence.





One day, these three girls saw a poster advertising for a Robotics Club. Eagerly they signed up. They went to meetings and tried to engage the untouchable high school students, but all to no avail. The idea that robotics is typically a “boys club” rang a little too true, as the team had no females, and its current members were not willing to accept more. These girls had grown up idolizing STEM leaders like Ada Lovelace and Sally Ride and had heard countless times that females in male-dominated fields must relentlessly pursue their interests to achieve the same level of involvement. So, these girls were not entirely surprised at the exclusion, though it was rather discouraging. They knew, however, that they would never be able to participate in any robotics-related events without at least attempting to include themselves in the team. In their freshman year, they volunteered at a competition their school’s team was competing at, yet they still were ignored.

Disheartened, these girls with a shared passion for STEM quit robotics.



Until 2017.

One day in 2017, the teacher of the Robotics Team asked Jessica, Ava, and Lauren to join. The team desperately needed more people, and these girls were the only ones even mildly interested. Cautiously, they signed up. They didn't expect much. The boys in high school who had once shunned them were still leading the team, and they did not like outsiders.



Then Ava watched a movie called *Hidden Figures*. She saw the strength and determination of those three women in NASA and became enamored with their bravery. While researching Katherine Johnson, Ava found a quote of hers: "Girls are capable of doing everything men are capable of doing. Sometimes they have more imagination than men." Ava took these words to heart and decided to put her all into robotics, spending hours after school, working with the new team, despite the older boys' reluctance. Empowered, Lauren and Jessica followed suit. As they gained confidence, these three girls began to lead their team, and as the semester continued, more girls joined. They saw the example of these three girls, saw their courage to do what they were passionate about, and decided to do the same.



Emma, a freshman who had just come to Malibu High, began with no experience and is now a star builder.



Annie, nerdy and dedicated, started out as a notebook manager and has now gained the skills and confidence to be a coder.

Jessica is still a joint builder and coder, while Ava has stuck with coding and Lauren with building. Accepting ourselves and our own personal interests helped us grow into the best leaders that we could be because we are all so passionate about our work.



Now our Robotics Team is fully equal to all innovative ideas, from men or women. While it once seemed impossible to overcome the problems facing us, through strength found in each other and initiatives like Girl Powered, we were able to surpass all expectations, and lead a robotics team that is dedicated, hardworking, and, through the power of girls, will be sure to succeed.