

Jasmine Parekh  
Team 750W

## STEMPOWERED WOMEN



Hi, I'm Jasmine Parekh. I was told I have about 1500 words to explain my entire life story to you, so let's get right to it. I have been doing robotics since 5th grade and now I'm in 11th grade. My first experience with robotics was essentially learning electronics and circuitry. I wired and programmed a breadboard robot from scratch that could light up in many different LED patterns, playback popular tunes, and dance to the steps of the Cupid Shuffle.

Famously known as the "Dance

Diva" this robot was showcased at the annual Maker Faire in New York City and eventually landed me an interview for a TV channel. I even had an article on my entire Maker Faire presentation written by ScienceLine. Here, the author writes, "It's not every day that a ten year old girl introduces you to her dancing robot. That doesn't faze Jasmine Parekh, a bubbly middle-schooler from New Jersey. Eager to break into **a field where most professionals are men older than her father.**

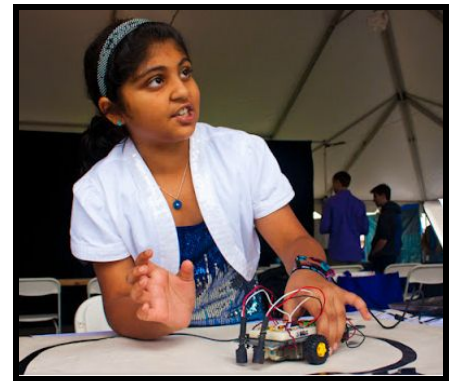
Jasmine has built a robot that dances in response to both audio and

visual cues". Millions of studies and experiments, serve to prove the widely known fact that the Engineering and Robotics Field is just one of the many fields that is overpowered by MEN. I, along with the hundred women in VEX are symbolic of change and my entire life is a testament



to diversity and women equality. Let's fast forward a little to 2014. My next major experience was participating in the Trinity Fire Fighting Robot Competition. In a team of four people (3:1 guys to girl), we built and programmed a fire fighting robot using Arduino. The objective of the competition was to make a robot that autonomously traveled through a maze while searching for "fire" (a candle) to extinguish. I remember doing a 20 hour marathon as we were approaching the competition date and wrestling with the guys on my team to give me a chance to even touch the robot, let alone code or build anything. The trick, I learned

over the years, is to prove them wrong. Show them that you CAN do something and after that DEMAND respect. It's the only way and I assure you it works. By the end of that season, not only was I the head engineer, but I was the representative of the team that went to collect the



huge trophy and gold medals when we won first place in the World. Lets fast forward now to high school. I joined the South Brunswick High School Robotics Team, specifically team 750W. Over the three years so far, I have actually seen a growing presence of girls in our clubs. In my freshmen year, there were only three girls that tried out for the team in comparison to about 50 boys. The next year, that number increased to about 12 girls compared to 56 boys. And this year the ratio of girls to boys is about 21 to 65. And our team itself this year has a perfect half and half ratio of 5 girls to 5 boys. Which is exactly how it should be! In our team, each job such as Engineering, Programming, Logistics, and Documentation has always has an equal amount of girls and boys working together. Not only does this give everyone a chance to participate, but it also means that each job is completed using multiple perspectives of at least one boy and one girl. I have learned over the years that diversity is key. Even the best builder and programmer can get stuck and needs assistance. And if that help is a person of different race, color, or gender then the ideas produced will only be more unique and diverse. In all honesty, I believe that our



team embodies the phrase, “Girl Power”. Not only because of the member ratio on our team, but because even the leadership roles of “Captain” and “Co-Captain” on our team are both filled by girls, namely me as Captain. Additionally, this year our team hosted a Girl Power Event in our district during National Girls Week. We planned engineering challenges and taught the girls about electronics and circuitry through Paper Circuits, also known as making Light - Up Greeting Cards. The

turnout was great, the entire library that we hosted the event at was filled almost to capacity. We even had an entire bus full of girls come from a town 30 minutes away. And as every girl left the event, with electronic cards, marshmallow towers, and Vex Robotics Swag, they all told us about how fun they had and how some were even seriously considering STEM in the future. This warmed my heart because now I, along with my entire team, were able to empower more young girls and give the little push and experience they may need to pursue a STEM career. In addition to our team, I think everyone can make a change help more and more girls to get a glimpse of the importance of STEM. And that is reason why I believe that Vex Robotics is promoting the right thing. Girl Power is always said to be a thing of the future, but it should and can be a thing of the PRESENT!

