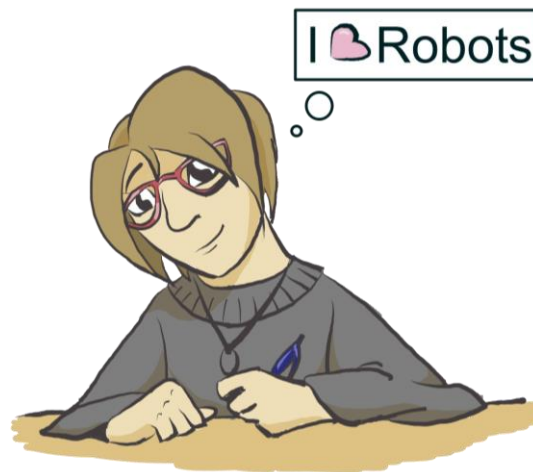


## VEX to Her

I am Madison Taylor Stumbaugh, a 17-year old girl and one of 12 students who spend their 3rd period in the school workshop building robots that stack cones. I joined the school's competitive robotics club when my friend, the club president, invited me to come to a meeting. Now, a year later, he can't be there anymore, and I'm robot crazy. This is my story since.



It's the first day of school and there are a few familiar faces in the room. A lot of my fellow seniors had to leave the team since robotics became a class and not an after school club. They didn't have the time in their schedule. The bell rang and class began. Our instructor greeted us returning students and welcomed the newcomers. We decided that 4 teams consisting of 3 students would make for the best use of our available robotics kits. I look around the room just to be sure. There was not one other girl in the room. Charlie, a band friend of mine and future team captain, and I decided to partner up. There was one student left without a team. Corbin, one of the first year members, made our group a trio.

## Team 3496A



November is coming to a close and Revere's Robotics II classroom smells like burnt aluminum. We have 1 week before we load up all 4 team's robots, kits and members and compete at our first competition. Lots of ambitious ideas fueled the creation of our team's robot. We left that competition with many lessons learned. Our team's robot ultimately failed as a result of inadequate driver practice, faulty design, and poor performing game partners. The 2-hour drive home was spent, on my part, disappointedly reflecting on the day's events. But, my teammates cheered me up by the end. We learned, and we had new ideas to try.

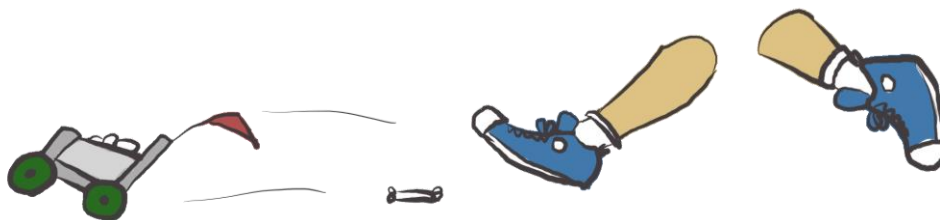


For the next two months we made wise use of our time. Charlie worked to make every notebook entry as thorough as he could. Corbin taught me how to code and even let me write some autonomous code. Charlie and I drove our fingers off during every lunch period before winter break. We knew how to drive, and we knew how to drive well. But, in the end, Charlie decided that I should be our team's driver during competition, having consistently

achieved the highest score in practice games. This made me proud because I was never the team driver the previous year.



Our second competition was on January 6th, 2018. We were ready. Having met up over break, Corbin, Charlie and I had worked out all the robot's kinks. We had a strategy. We knew what our robot, affectionately named, "Isaac", could do and what he couldn't. We walked into the competition excited as opposed to nervous. We set up our temporary work station and got ready. While we were not finalists, we were asked to be alliance members in the semifinals. Between the robots offering smarties and the support from friends, family, and even our principal, I had a great time.



"Girl Powered" sounds to me like an overpowering of females. We are awesome, yeah. But, we are not that much different from our fellow male competitors and teammates. To see more girls become involved in STEM programs would be a wonderful sight. Yet, I believe both male and female students benefit from STEM activities. As my mom, an electrical engineering graduate taught me, "Your race and gender shouldn't be what makes you a valuable asset. Your skill, knowledge and application of that knowledge is what proves your worth."

