

Women Can Change the World

Women have been underestimated by men for centuries. Has it ever crossed your mind to think why women have been so undervalued? Since the dawn of time, men and women have played traditional roles; the man in the dominant role as the provider. Women usually were in a submissive role as the caregiver or child bearer. It seemed that men ruled the world for centuries. However, beginning in the 20th century, an increased number of women entered the workforce which affected the gender roles and changed the way families divided their own household work. Once WWII arrived, there was no other alternative but to employ women for “male” roles as most of the men were shipped off to war. Women pursued higher education and began carving their own path. Today, we are seeing engineering firms hiring more women to work for companies like NASA, Boeing, JPL, etc. Perhaps in our generation, women might have less difficulty being hired for engineering jobs, but the struggle for equality is real. While it seems common knowledge that women and men have the same competencies, the challenge is that women have been underestimated. Fortunately for my generation, women have taken a stand and waves of equality movements have shifted how women are viewed.

Joining the robotics team has given me tremendous insight on the value of women equality and empowerment. The initial reason why I joined the robotics team is because I enjoyed taking the classes during school and over the summer. Learning how to construct, assemble and maneuver objects was exhilarating for me. Being on the team has given me a new perspective on the importance of working more as a collaborative unit. Additionally, it taught me to stand up for my ideas and have a voice on a team sprinkled with diverse backgrounds and personalities. This experience has trained me to work efficiently under pressure and to understand the importance of working collectively rather than as an individual. Our immediate team is made up of four young men and two young women. I must admit, that I felt a little intimidated by the boys on our team. However, with time I knew my teammates no longer viewed my teammate, Autumn, and myself as “girls” but just as teammates. Through hard work and determination, *Girl Powered* has positively shifted the attitude of our team as we learned to openly communicate and respect each other’s opinions.

We have become each other's cheerleaders and have broken down stereotypes.



Our backstory in the beginning is similar to most as we were all assigned various roles based on our strengths, dabbling in design, coding or building. Initially there was some hesitation within our group sharing ideas about improving our robot if the idea didn't fall in the parameter of our role. Over time, we grew more comfortable with each other and were able to see solutions from each other's perspective. Having that trust allowed us to excel and earn our "rookie team" some awards. Winning the VEX awards for Sportsmanship and the Amaze award only fueled our excitement and confidence after our first tournament in November 2018. By the time our second tournament rolled in December 2018, we won the Skills Award and later we discovered we advanced to state in March 2019. I speak for my entire team that we all feel tremendous value being part of robotics with shared interest, admiration and creativity. This success is a testament to our team commitment and a reflection on how far we have become in advancing opportunities for young women and young men alike.

Although quite a few women have lived behind the shadows of successful men, there were others that broke new ground and shattered expectations. One of those many extraordinary women engineers is my personal hero, Sally Kristen Ride. Ride was the first American woman astronaut, and without a doubt, she revolutionized the movement for women engineers. She was brilliant and studied physics at Stanford. NASA was seeking applicants for their space program and in 1978 she applied and was chosen to join NASA. This was exciting because there were not many women in the space program, and she was one of the few chosen out of 8,000 applicants. On June 18th of 1983 she officially became the first American woman astronaut on the STS 7 mission. After NASA, Ride co-founded a program called *Sally Ride Science*. Ride believed in encouraging children, mostly girls, to embrace science and engineering. This program is a tremendous advocate for advancing and teaching girls about science and engineering. It also provides young women with role models that encourage confidence and promote intellectual power.

Unfortunately, we have learned there are many young girls who don't have the opportunity to be on a school's robotics team due to lack of funding. We believe everyone

deserves a chance and hope these young women are given the tools to flourish and become confident. It's exciting for us to know "Girl Powered" is paving the way for young adults with a variety of opportunities in science and engineering. As a result of these opportunities, there is unbelievable support for women engineers which I know will help today's young women become tomorrow's leaders in engineering. Women will no longer be viewed or expected to be in traditional roles, but rather become recognized as successful engineers or astronauts. Now is the time young women can choose their own path without being pressured from society or their families to be something else. Being on the Miraleste Robotics Team has inspired me to pursue my own dreams regardless of stereotypes or gender. It has encouraged me to take more of an interest in engineering and embark on the journey to become an astronaut or work for NASA. My hope is that more girls will view engineering as an exciting opportunity they can pursue and absolutely achieve. No longer will women be undervalued and underestimated...we are here to change the world!

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