

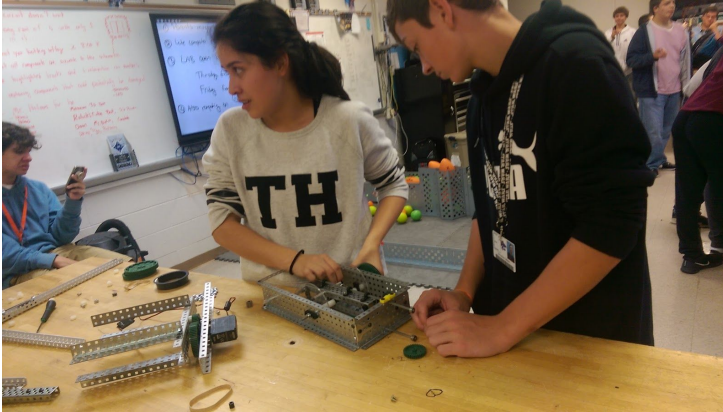
My experience in being part of a robotics team

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<https://challenges.robotevents.com/challenge/86>

I'm a 15-year-old high school girl living in the city of Charleston, SC,, but I was born in Mexico and lived there for 10 years. Growing up I was taught that girls should dress nicely, be delicate, and be good housekeepers, but I knew that I could be more. I convinced my mom to sign me up to play sports. I have played sports for as long as I can remember and I always wanted to try new things and do my best. I was a natural leader in anything I did, I was confident, but when I heard at school that there aren't many women in the field of engineering, I was interested and wanted to do more. I asked my mom to sign me up for robotics and coding classes, I was captivated and I wanted to know more. I was 9 when I found out that we were moving out of the country. I thought that this would give me more opportunities to learn more about engineering, but when I got the US I didn't know how to speak English so it was hard for me to talk to people. On top of my limited English, I was also pushed forward a grade from where I should have been. I was really nervous to talk to people. I slowly closed myself off and become quiet and shy. I wanted to change that, and when I got to high school, I wanted to be my old self again, but I wasn't sure how. Then I found out that the school had a robotics team! I had completely forgotten the love I had for robotics, so I made my mind up and joined.

On the first day of robotics, I noticed that there was only one girl on the entire team. Her name was Emmy. I was really shy and I was scared to talk to her but Mr. Holmes, the club sponsor, introduce me to her and made me feel welcome. After the first few meetings, robotics seemed boring, and I was finding my interest elsewhere, in volleyball, archery, and German.



This year, as a sophomore, I saw the posters and something clicked in my head. I wanted to rejoin the team, give it another try, so I joined again. I had never given up on anything before, so why should I now?

I now have my own team, a girl-powered team. The four girls on my team are Copeland, Cadence, and Emily. I would never have expected any of them to be the robotics type, but we are all working really well together and have become good friends. On my team last year, I was the only girl. There is a world of difference between then and now.

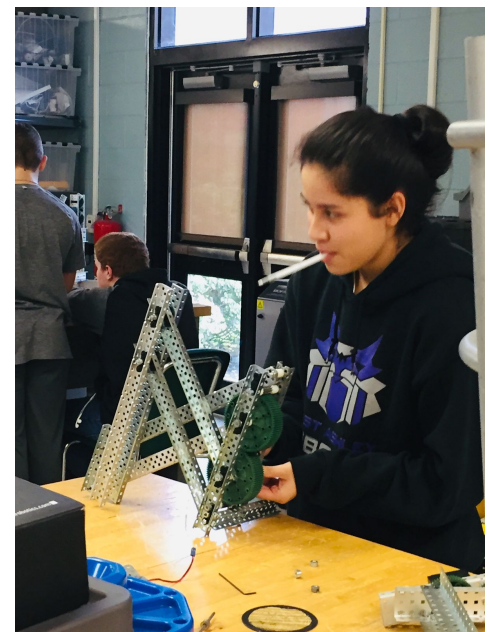
Before I quit last year, Emmy talked to me and told me that she wanted to be an engineer at Clemson and by joining robotics she would learn some important skills. She told me that it's hard to stand out into the robotics field and be taken seriously in a field dominated by guys, but if you work hard you'll be satisfied with the results. I wanted to make her proud because she helped me to open up and be myself again, now I'm more confident and I am taken seriously by the people in the club (mostly guys). I can get my point across and get things done, and with more girls in the team, we can come up with different ideas, have a more organized

team and make any other girls that want to join feel welcome.



One of my goals as one of the team leaders is to introduce more and more girls to the program and make them feel welcome. I also want to show others that robotics it's not only coding and nerd stuff, but it's more than that.

When i heard the phrase " Girl Powered" I think of women and girls more like me having the courage to come out of their comfort zone and push their limits; try things that no one has done before and hope to succeed even when all the odds are against them. I struggled through my first 3 years in middle school and had to deal with depression, but joining robotics made me open up and helped me a lot. I have made close friends in this program and we treat each other as family, even Mr. Holmes (believe it or not), he is a really friendly teacher and he is very approachable. I want to show other girls that this type of programs are really fun and I can find people from all around the world that have similar interests. Robotics helps build up social skills which can be used in the future and it can help develop other sets of skills for a future in engineering. I hope that I made a good impact on these girls like Emmy did on me and will encourage more girls to join this kind of activities in this field of robotics.



Some things that we do as a team is to hold robotics demonstrations at middle schools and invite the community to see what our school, Wesley Ashley, and ur robotics program do. It is so amazing to see little girls come and ask questions about the robots and drones and look up to me and say "mommy look! She is flying a drone! I wanna do that too!" and have parents coming to our table and ask for information about how all this works. I hope more and more girls will get interested in robotics and accomplish many more things that I did. Our team consist of mostly guys but us 4 girls can make a lot of a difference too, and for being my second year in the team and have the respect of the guys makes me think that we can make this field more open and to see all these accepting people makes me think that in the next couple years more and more girls will be joining robotics and will be seen with more respect and be able to erase that stereotype of " skinny, nerd looking girl" that loves robotics and be more diverse.