

# What Girl Power Means to Us



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# Our Past

Our VEX journey has come a long way from when we first began. In January of 2017, Mattison and I were partnered to be on a VEX team with Georgia. Mattison and Georgia volunteered at church together and they both met me through classes we had had together that year. Not knowing anything about VEX in the beginning, both Mattison and I followed Georgia's lead in what to do. As the Starstruck season progressed, we all learned more about each other and about VRC. During our sixth grade season, we were able to achieve having the number one skills score in South Carolina and to qualify for the the VEX Worlds Championship. We learned about Girl Powered at Worlds. At first, we were very confused because we had never seen our gender as a disadvantage when we were creating and building. When we were competing, we were allied with a team from California that only had one girl. She told us she struggled to be heard a lot of the time because her other team mates said she was "just a girl." Though they viewed it as a joke, she believed that because of her gender she was incapable of being smart enough for engineering. Being an all girls team, we kind of took it for granted and didn't really appreciate what it meant to be surrounded by other girls. After that experience, it became crucial to us that we only put girls on our team. One of Mattison's best friends (and classmates of Georgia and I) Emma Grayce, had taken a liking to VEX and wanted to join, so she became apart of the team and just a few days later we added Jalyn, a girl Emma used to go to church with and a friend of Mattison's.



# How It's Worked For Us

Although being a Girl Powered team has brought us all together, we all have a chemistry that works well together. We all are extremely different and because of that, we're able to build off each others ideas. We all have different goals in life, also. Jalyn wants to to be a political scientist in the future. Emma Grayce wants to be an environmental engineer, Georgia wants to be a mechanical engineer, Mattison wants to be a children's nurse, and Madison wants to go into journalism. Though paths are set for different ways, we all are still able to come together through VEX and be a team. Being together, we've really had to learn how to work together as one.

In Social Studies, we learn about how women used to be ranked differently in society. In the past, women were taught that they were, and always would be, inferior to men. Young girls were not educated; they were taught to take care of children, clean house, and to cook. They were told that they did not have near as much value as the men in our society. One woman who really inspired girls everywhere, including us, was Katherine Johnson. Growing up, she face a dilemma. She was a woman of color and during her time, she was never seen as equal to anyone. Katherine Johnson was considered "the lowest of the low." She really has inspired us because during her time, she still fought for her rights and let nothing stand in her way of being a smart and successful woman. From a young age, she was extremely talented at math and looked forward to school because she got to learn. She went into a world of STEM, even though everyone doubted her. We think Katherine Johnson is Girl Powered. She challenged everyone's standard thinking of women and was constantly pushing her boundaries.



# Girl Power In Our Eyes

This year, we had the opportunity to go out into some of our local engineering places and see how it worked. For us, it was a shock to see how small the percentages of women in these fields were. Everywhere we went was engineer based and everytime the men outnumber the women. We spoke to a woman there that was a manager and she said that she didn't let her gender get in the way of her work life. She said that when she was at work, she tried to push things like that out of her mind and not see it as a disability of hers, but more of an ability because she was able to show how powerful and valuable an educated person, no matter of their sex, can be to a team of engineers.

A lot places today still don't view women as equals. We are lucky to have a community who recognizes what we do and supports us. At school, our teachers, principals, and administration see our accomplishments and put forth effort to do what they can to further our success. Thanks to all the promotion we've received, working hard, and reaching out to other teams for guidance, we've had the highest skills score in South Carolina for two years in a row, won excellence at our state competition last season, and have been to VEX Worlds twice.



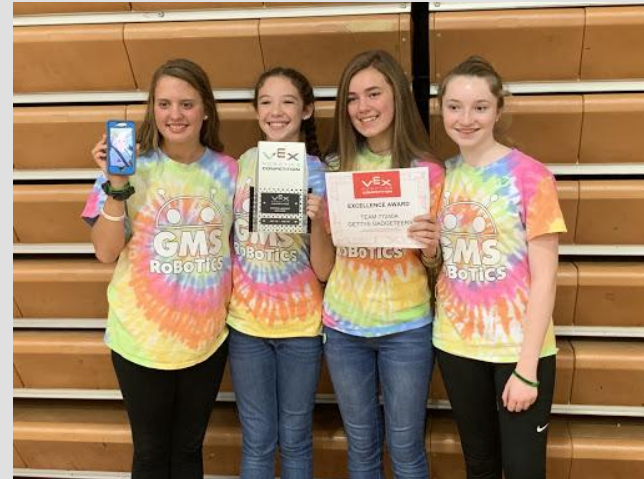
# How We've Spread Girl Power

Getting our name along with the Girl Powered motto has been something that we've tried to focus our attention on. Every year, our school does a tour for the rising sixth graders and we always come in to introduce them to what VEX is, so that they have the opportunity to experience robotics as soon as possible. We go to elementary schools in our district and when they have STEM night, we bring out our robot and let the younger kids drive it around and explain to them what we do everyday in our robotics class. We get to tell them how exciting it is to become apart of team of students who always support you, but you also get to compete with them while getting to know teams from all over your state. We think that our school does a very good job encouraging every student to try VEX. Because of the way women used to be seen, most girls now take interest in things in those fields. Gettys opens up it's doors for everyone to learn about what the STEM careers intell and what they're really like.



## Where We Are Today

Today, we are striving to be better than last year. We have competed in two competitions so far this season and have won an Excellence Award and a Design Award. We hope to have the number one skills score in South Carolina, once again, and return to VEX Worlds for our last year of middle school and afterwards, plan to go onto high school to continue competing. For our robot this year, we are not focusing on placing the caps on the poles, but instead having an eight motor chassis and an extremely powerful linear puncher.



Written by Madison Cleveland

Other team member include, Jalyn Jeanes, Mattison Hayes, Emma Grayce Hemphill, and Georgia Tate

We are the Gettys Gadgeteers

Team 77240A

From Gettys Middle School

In Easley, South Carolina