

## **Girl Powered**

By: 6008C, "C U Later"

The phrase "girl-powered" has been motivation for girls everywhere and our team is no exception. The phrase is used to express the strength for women to rise above the majority and any hardships that stand in the way. For us, girl-powered means to be your own hero in everything you do. May that be in your career, personal life, or Robotics Club. Girl power is a strength. Girl power is independence. Girl power is confidence. Girl power is an inspiration.

Our team started in sixth grade with just Hailee Miller as the notebook documenter, Jessica Valentine as the programmer, Connor Cox as the driver, and Logan Suiter as the builder. The roles on our team were strongly based on the previous normality's of the male/female roles that filled our vex teams. Our team stayed intact until freshman year when Ethan Kavanagh joined our team as a builder and driver, while Logan and Connor left our team. We kept that team for the next three years of Vex Robotics until Ethan had to leave for personal reasons. When Ethan left the team, we were very discouraged. The stigma of the club as a whole was very man-driven, and there we were, currently a team of two females that didn't know how to drive a robot let, alone build one.

But then our Vex program supervisor, Jodie Kavanagh, inspired us to keep our heads up and believe in our abilities. She told us, "Just because you might not have the experience or the knack for the building does not mean you can not do it." She believed in us, so why couldn't we? She has motivated us to continue working this season through all of the ups and downs. She has been our role model due to her unfaltering support and because she also has a degree in engineering. She was not afraid to go into a field that is primarily run by men and she succeeded in it.



Due to Kavanagh's supporting words, Jessica recruited her friend Libby to help Hailee with the



notebook so that she could take on the challenge and responsibility of building their robot. She has never built a robot before -- she has only assisted the guys on the team when they needed it -- so this was a big thing for the team. Jessica also took over the responsibility of programming because she took POE (Principles of Engineering) that year and one thing that is covered in that class is programming. Plus, she is the person that knows the robot the best and so she should be able to program the robot

correctly. Before the very first competition, we recruited Julian as our team driver because he was interested in the Robotics program and he knows a controller very well due to video games.

We have noticed that with our team primarily being a "Girl-Powered" team we communicate better and don't argue as much; we motivate and support each other rather than tearing each other down. We also have different problem-solving techniques because girls are treated differently than boys when growing up. Girls and boys have always had different expectations growing up and having "Girl Power" helps teams like ours break through those expectations. Girls are normally steered toward delicate activities like dress up and house while boys were always expected to be hands on with tools and other gadgets. Our team formed under these expectations and in our later years we've been able to break free of them and do the things we weren't "allowed" to do.

We've even helped other little kids in breaking through their expectations through different volunteer events. This past summer we had the opportunity to visit a summer camp for foster kids and teach them about what we do. We introduced them to Vex IQ by helping them build the basic clawbot

design and allowing them to drive them through a maze. All of us were pleasantly surprised to see how interested the girls were in our program.

Later in the year, Libby and Jessica started to volunteer at our local library called “Rockin’ Robotics” we go to the library once every month to teach little kids about how everything works. This program is a mix of boys and girls so the little boys in the groups were always trying to overtake the building portion of the program and the little girls were hanging back. With little encouragement, we were able to coax them out of their shells and they started contributing to the building and conversation. We brought Vex IQ kits to the library and let them build the clawbot from the instruction manual.

Vex robotics has had a huge impact on all of our lives, it is something that we will all remember. We will all remember everything that we’ve learned throughout our whole Vex experience. We all joined for different reasons and it has helped us in different ways, but we will always share the memories of this experience. When we reach adulthood we will believe in ourselves more and not let men overshadow our abilities in the workplace, because even though men believe that they are better than us we are girl powered and we can do everything just as well as them.

