

Girl Powered; Powered by Girls

My Experience in Robotics
Copeland Johnson
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A little bit about me,

My name is Copeland Johnson. I am 16 years old and I am from Charleston, SC. I am a sophomore at West Ashley High School.

I feel like I am a science minded person, I have taken 5 science classes in my high school career and plan to take several more.

I also play guitar, paint, bake, I am a youth group leader at my church, and I am the vice president of philosophy club.

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How I found out about robotics



My Mom, Dad,
brother and I
during the
Summer of 2018

I first hear about or robotics program though my freshman homeroom teacher, Mr. Holmes, who is the robotics club sponsor. Even though I wasn't in his class, the time I spent in his homeroom was memorable. The second day of school, he flew a drone at some kid, and I knew I wanted to be in his class. I didn't sign up for his engineering class last year, but I did this year and I was in it first semester. My interest in the club was fueled during second semester of my freshman year when I was in chemistry with several people who were in robotics, and they were really awesome to be around. They inspired me to check out robotics in the fall of this school year.

The First Meeting

The first day I actually was in robotics was the first day of the semester when I walked into mechatronics for second period. There were 3 other girls in that class and Mr. Holmes said that was the most he had ever had in a Mech class. I knew there would not be many, if any girls at all in the meeting, and I was surprised when there were 3. My now teammate, Oriana, welcomed me, and introduced me to Cadence and Emily, the other two girls on our team. I knew we would do great things together, regardless if we were on the same team or not.



Flying a drone at our West Ashley Middle robotics demo on 11/5/18

The Girly Team

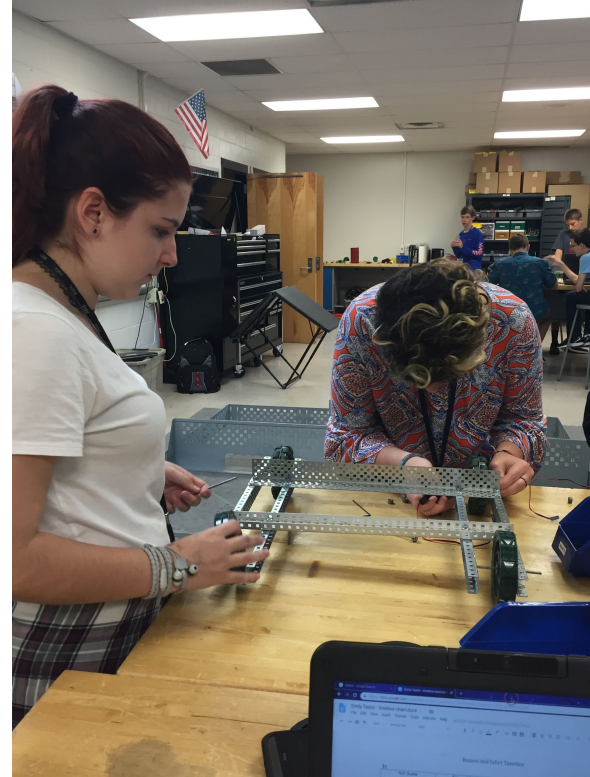


Oriana and I making cookies for the holiday party. We 3D printed the cookie cutter in the shape of our robotics logo.

At the first meeting, Mr. Holmes asked us if we wanted to be an all girls team. I'll be honest, I didn't really want to do an all girls team. I was supposed to go into the training round and join Nathan Gillner (one of the robotics guys in my chemistry class) 's team. But, I looked around at the other girls, saw the hope in their faces and said yes. I am so glad I said yes to joining we all feel united, and being on a team with other girls makes us being a minority in the club easier.

Doing my Part

During the first week of robotics, we went through a 'training gauntlet' to figure out team placements. I was the worst in my group for driving, going around the circle in 45 seconds. Not good... I got to level 8 on the coding challenge, but that was average. But the building challenge was where I really shone. The goal was to build the tallest tower possible using old game pieces and screwdrivers. I built a 30in tall tower, the tallest in the entire club, beating the previous record by 3 in. Obviously, I was assigned to be the builder



Cadence and I working on the base of our robot

Working With the Guys

Working with the guys on my team and in the club can be tough. It was especially difficult at first because I was new, and it didn't help that I was also a girl. Some people made sexist jokes and would not be helpful because they didn't think I could do something, but as time went on and I learned how to use the power tools in robotics, it became much easier. Now, I feel like I am really a part of the robotics family and that everyone has accepted me.



The whole robotic club and some alumni at our holiday party

My STEM Role Model



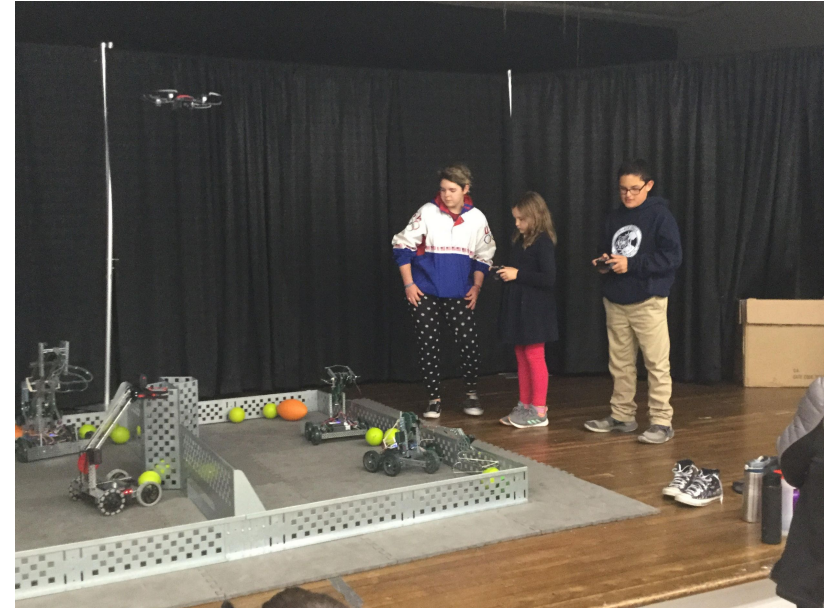
My favorite women in STEM is Marie Curie. Curie was a woman in a field that no one ever thought a woman could be involved in, much less succeed in. She pioneered research on radioactivity and was the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She inspires me because of her perseverance under pressure and her willingness to continue her work even though the world told her she couldn't.



So, What's Changed?

Overall, my short experience in robotics has been one of the best experiences of my life. I really feel like I've found my niche and I have become really close to everyone on my team, and just about everyone in the club. I have learned new skills, and formed friendships that I hope will last a lifetime.

In the end, being a girl in robotics isn't as difficult as one might expect. It is definitely a different experience, but it is a good one. If I had to go back and do it again, I would in a heartbeat.



Helping kids work with the robots at the Orange Grove Middle Demo on 11/9/18