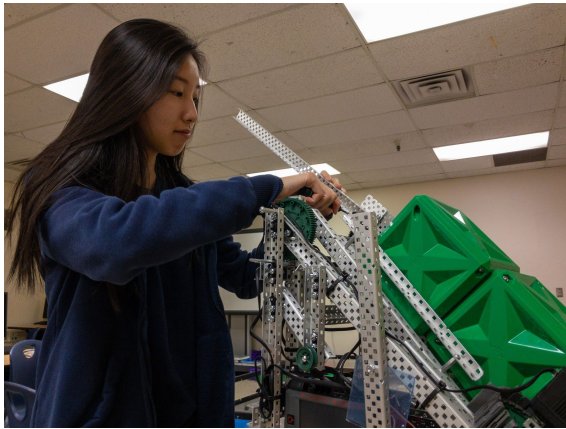


What it means to be a girl in VEX

The phrase “Girl Powered” speaks a lot to me, especially being the only girl in a group of 16 people. I am currently a junior in high school and I have continuously seen the lack of females in the STEM field throughout my life. However, I have never allowed this gender difference to create a barrier between me and my passion for STEM. Instead, it pushes me to work harder to show that girls can be just as passionate and capable in STEM as boys are. This is the first year our school has had a robotics club since I’ve been in high school, and naturally, I was interested in joining. Although I was very unfamiliar with robotics, it’s something I’ve always wanted to try and



learn about. At first, since as I was the only girl on the team, it was slightly intimidating. However, after talking to some other team members about what I was interested in doing at VEX, I felt welcomed and included. Joining the robotics club has turned out to be one of my best decisions. It has enabled me to get hands on experience in engineering and grow important skills such as planning, consensus building, and marketing that I will use throughout my life. I’ve also had lots of fun with my team so far and I’m really looking forward to this next semester.

When I think of ‘Girl Power’ and the empowerment of women in general, I think of equality. To me, women empowerment is the ability to have the same opportunities as men and the freedom to make our own choices without any restraint or judgment. Girl Power has a lot to do with the rejection of patriarchy and systematic female oppression resulting from toxic masculinity and generational stereotypes. Being confident is what makes girls feel powerful. The ability to share your ideas confidently and have people take you seriously is very valuable. In the setting of VEX and STEM, girl power is even more meaningful. It is so beneficial to have girls that can lift each other up and feel empowered in a male-dominated area. Girls have so much potential in the world of robotics/STEM and everyone needs to realize that. Our team actively supports girls and these ideas of women empowerment. We embrace equality and unity and the values that come along with it.



VEX is a great learning experience for everyone and we encourage anyone who’s interested in joining to try it out. My team supports diversity and accepts all genders and races. To us, it doesn’t matter who you are, just as long as you’re interested in robotics. An inclusive environment is very important to us as we want everyone to feel like they are involved. I strongly believe our team wouldn’t be as successful as we are if we weren’t open-minded. A lot of our achievements come from working as a team and being united.

Cooperation is key in VEX. Our team works together on everything; it's a very collaborative effort. Since we have such a large number of people on our team, we divide ourselves up so that everyone gets to do something. We brainstorm and bounce ideas off each other; it's very



important to communicate with the people around you. Our team is organized into 2 main categories: building and coding. Other roles include drivers, notebook, photographer, and financier. Some people have multiple roles and we have various captains. It's very flexible to move around roles and experiment with new things. At competitions, our team tries to get everyone on the team to have a shot at spotting. Afterward, we go over what went wrong and spend the next few weeks revising and improving for the next competition.

In the beginning, we only had one robot and one big team. Then more people started joining so when we built our second robot, we decided it would be a good idea to have two teams. Starting around mid-November, the FTC robotics team joined VEX and created our third VEX team at our school. There were several girls in the new team that joined from FTC, some of whom I was already familiar with. Although they were on a different team, it was very comforting to have more girls in VEX that were interested in robotics like me. I believe equal participation of girls and boys will change our team dynamic and make us excel even more. It is a shame that more girls aren't interested in robotics at our school but I hope that in the years to come, this will change.

My personal experience at VEX has been wonderful so far. My role in VEX has mainly been building. I love working with my team and I have learned so much about building robots. It's really cool to see the robot that we built from scratch perform with other robots at competitions. Our team supervisor is Mrs. Lozano, the computer science teacher at our school and a CMU graduate. It's really encouraging to have a female role model to look up to and talk with. She definitely tries to make VEX as inclusive as possible and encourages her students to join. I hope we'll make it far this season and I'll definitely do VEX again next year.

-Credits-

Alyssa G Yoon

Team 58855S - La Cueva High School

What it means to be a girl in VEX

