

## My Journey into STEM through Vex

At the beginning of 2018, our school decided to start a Vex Robotics Club. The president of the club approached me, knowing my love for science, and asked if I wanted to join and be able to help other females to join as well. Walking into the robotics club the first meeting was scary, so many faces I had never seen before, and barely anyone from my grade.



\*I am pictured in the striped shirt. I was passed in being able to drive the bot.

We were ushered into different sides of the room, and there, at random our teams were chosen. Our team consisted of two girls and three boys. It was a pretty even split considering there were thirty-seven guys in robotics and three gals. All of my life I had communicated with mostly the same gender, and it seemed that this was the same way for most of the boys as well. Most certainly, the diversity in our team benefited us from that day forward. Our team suddenly

became united after spending countless hours after school with each other. We had such a diversity in team members and abilities, it all seemed to click.



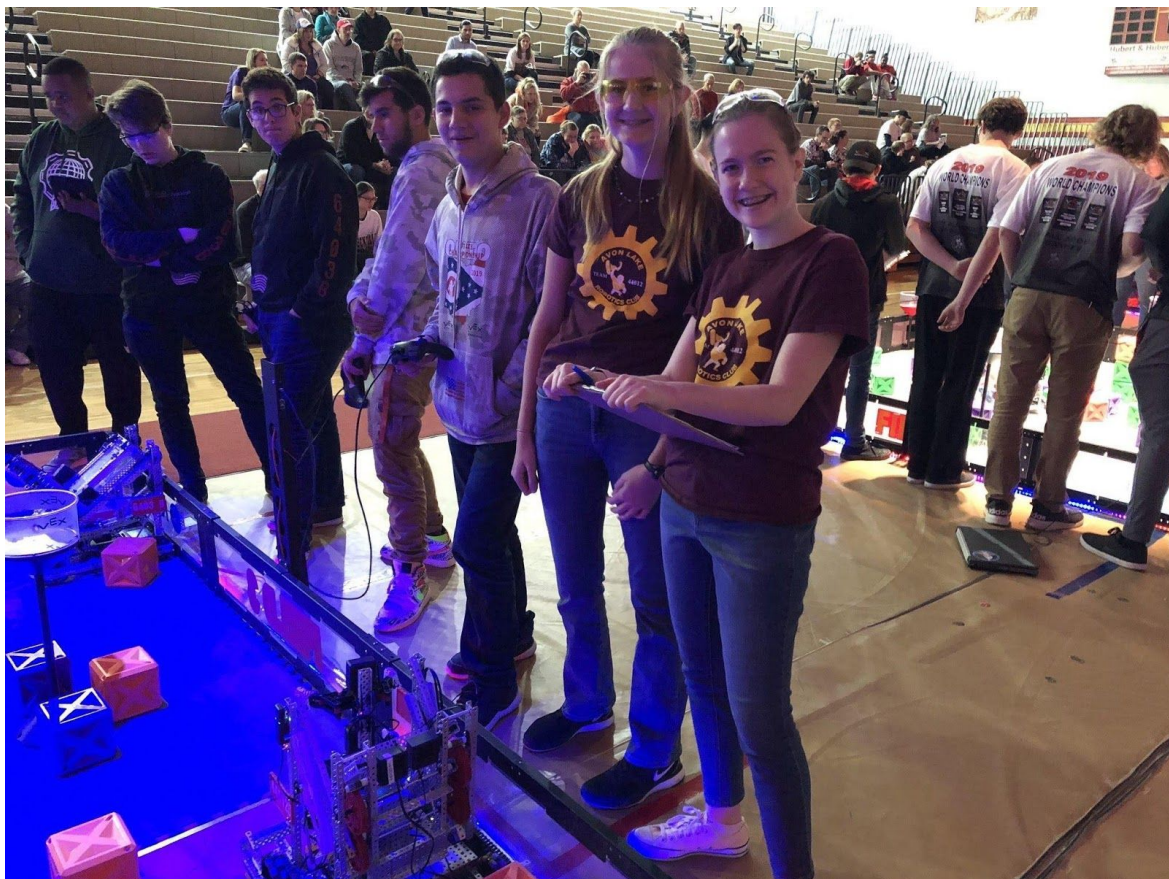
I remember one day in particular a boy from our robotics club told me that I couldn't contribute to my friends dream of building a rocket (was to be called Space Vex). He told me that when we come back for our reunion it can't be the "three amigos and the girl" who did such a cool thing of building the rocket. My whole team and others approached him on how inappropriate he was acting, and even more members from the group as a whole! That was the moment when I realized how strong of a bond our whole club had, not just my individual team. When I, not just as a female, but a person, feel this pressure put on me by others, I need to think of the past and the people who have paved the way for myself and other females in robotics. The example set before us by Mary Jackson, who worked at what we now know as NASA as an aerospace engineer, is a prime example of overcoming oppression. For years in her workplace she suffered discrimination and segregation. No doubt that Ms. Jackson was called plenty of nasty names and was at many times underestimated. After 34 years of working at NASA, Mary

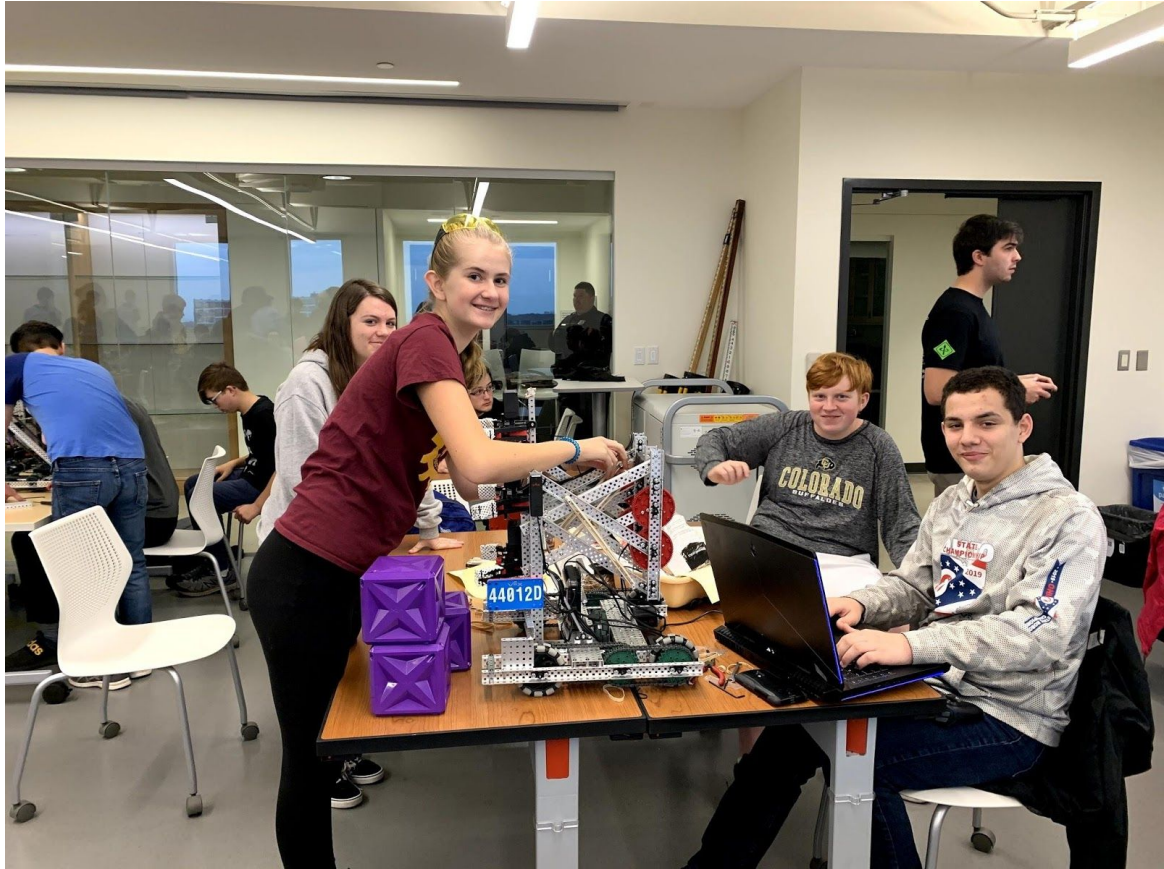
Jackson took a demotion in order to become Langley's Federal Women's Program Manager. Mary Jackson took a demotion for something that she believed in, hiring females in STEM at NASA. Ms. Jackson is an example of a strong female leader, who proves how diversity can only help in the long run, and not hurt. Because of Mary Jackson, females now have the opportunity to a workforce previously unavailable, and with such diversity, STEM will be uplifted.



The strong bond that our team shares is partially due to our genders, I believe. Each member of our team is so uniquely different. This season, we have three girls and three boys, making our team the most “diverse” in the school. One of our members is always three steps ahead in his brain. One of our members always is so prepared that if we got lost in a desert she would have all the materials to help us live for the next year. One of our members is always ready to help others and encourage; he always has a helping hand. One of our members fixes anything wrong with the robot in crunch time and he does it all calmly while the rest of us our

panting on the sidelines. One of our members encourages us even when we don't do so well in a match; she gives us the optimism to continue forward. All of the members on our team are different, our differences don't ever seem to hurt us, even though many of us are polar opposites of each other. We've even sat down and had round table discussions on the events in everyone's life to give encouragement. We've done outside activities with our team members and club, making our bond even stronger. Our differences and abilities have led to us being one of our schools top teams, this season and the last. Our team was picked randomly, and none of us knew each other, yet we have grown so close and come so far. Myself and our team are looking forward to all we can accomplish in the rest of the season, and are excited to be participating in the VEX Ohio State's Competition in March.





## <sup>1</sup>Work Cited

Loff, Sarah. "Mary Jackson Biography." *NASA*, NASA, 22 Nov. 2016,

[www.nasa.gov/content/mary-jackson-biography/](http://www.nasa.gov/content/mary-jackson-biography/).

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: Photo one was taken by Carter Knox (another club member). Photo three is from NASA.

## Credits

Entrant: Kayland Morris

Team number: 44012D

Title: My Journey into STEM through Vex