

Beyond Cultural Boundaries

THUNDER - 10638 A

Exploring a world that is mainly dominated by boys had been an unthinkable idea before this club started. As you read along, you will find out why.

When asked about girls and boys' capabilities, it comes to people's mind what seems to be an automatic response: girls and boys have the same technical and creative skills. Nevertheless, we would like to add up "if they are properly encouraged and prepared." We believe the importance of pointing this out because in our culture it's commonly seen that boys develop this kind of knowledge and girls are being left aside. Or worse, girls themselves step aside from these activities. You might be wondering why.

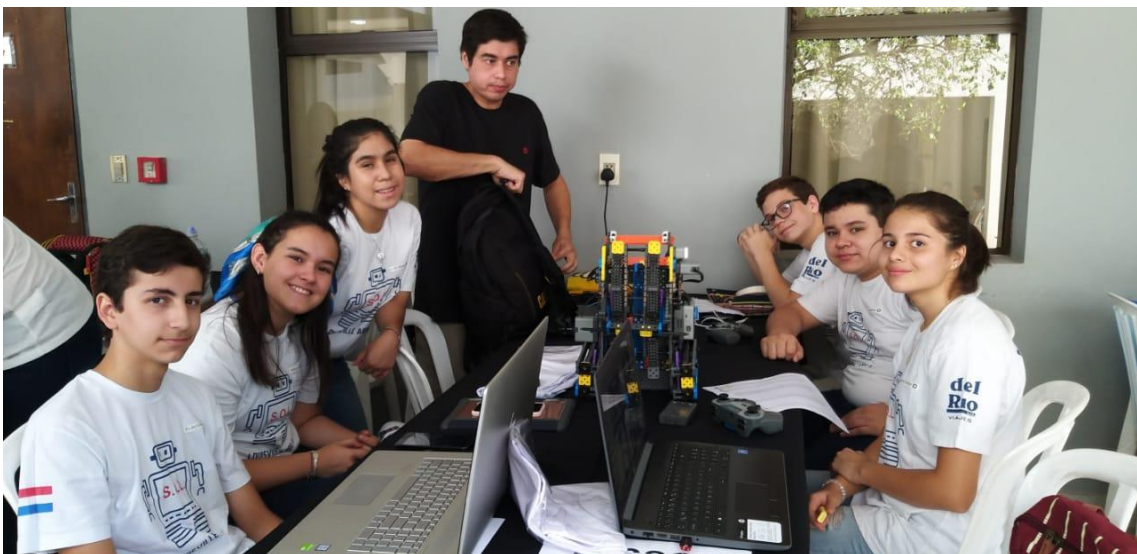
Long story short, we basically believe this behavior is set up unconsciously in early childhood, when boys are being encouraged to experience with physics by playing with ramps and cars while girls are being exposed to toys that already set them into a "house wife" role.

Luckily, we were given the chance to experience something totally different. We were given the chance to explore "a boy's world." A forbidden world for girls. And we were supported.

Our team is not a hundred percent conformed by girls. Actually, it's a 50/50 combination.



On a daily basis, the way in which we interact with one another clearly evidences that the level of opportunities and responsibilities are equal, avoiding any types of gender discrimination. This behavior is not only encouraged by our school and coaches, but by our male classmates as well.



In addition, both girls and boys are constantly being supported by each other, and all the technical knowledge is being learned and taken into practice by both girls and boys. It's like working inside a bubble...A bubble we need to protect so that no prejudices will ever blow it up.

Unfortunately, our experience is different from what we usually experience in our STEM environment. Boys are always in charge of all technical tasks and girls are given paper work. We do not mean there's something wrong with it. Our main point is that apparently society cannot see girls beyond this task.

Moreover, according to our captain's experience, Agustina, being the only girl in her team and the robotics club, as well as one of the few girls in the whole national robotics league in the past, wasn't an easy task. As a driver and builder -a boy's role, she had to prove herself in ways in which no other boy had. She had to work her way in. Luckily, she was surrounded by male colleagues and friends who believed in her. This is why we believe that boys should carry the GIRL POWERED flag together with girls.

As a result, throughout the year, her experience had notoriously improved, which led the team to very good results at the end of the year, and that's how other girl's attention was caught. Some of them even took part in the activity.

Many years have passed and now we can proudly say that the amount of girls and boys in our club are almost the same.



This incredible journey has led not only the girls in this team, but generally all girls in the club, to experience different roles beyond paper work. It encouraged girls to see themselves as drivers, programmers and designers.

So, what are we expecting? The answer is quite simple... We expect girls to wonder, to be surprised by their capabilities, to end up loving what they do!

We expect girls to embrace and develop their ideas, especially when it comes to robot designs, even when they seem beyond functional, almost being qualified as absurd. You might wonder why... Well, we found out that thinking outside the box can be very productive and we expect to encourage other girls to keep dreaming, to keep thinking, to keep up with the crazy ideas! We expect diversity to keep being a part of the club and this team. We expect every girl to become a role model, because every girl in the club has been an inspiration for others, as well as every female coach.



We have seen each other's strengths when facing problems. We have seen bravery; when girls are not afraid of working on a field that is being mostly led by men. We have seen commitment; when girls did not give up, when they were pursuing learning throughout the process. We

have seen tears, struggle, inspiration, perseverance, teamwork and passion in every single girl who is part of this world...That's why we believe that these "common and unknown" female characters are the best role models there could ever be.

For us, as a team, listening to the right people over to what the entire society had been telling us for a long time gave us a new life perspective which lead us to the path to successfulness, to prove ourselves, to win the Excellence Award that took us to VEX Worlds, to earn the DESIGN AWARD in Kentucky!

Difficulties are always going to stand ahead, but nothing is impossible if one by one we start making a difference. Girl Powered is not a utopia anymore, it is just in front of us and it is time to accept and face the challenge, girls and boys united.

At last, but not least, we would like to introduce ourselves and share a bit of our story.



“I have been a driver -and I liked it, even though at first I got nervous. I have also been a 3D designer -which was difficult and complicated. After trying these roles, at last, I have become a robot builder besides being a back-up driver.”

Axel Meixner

“Once, I tried to be a driver, but I was terrible at it! Because I always liked writing I ended up being the engineering journal writer and got involved in this new world of creativity. This helped me to be organized and work in a team.”

Ámbar Meyer

“I’ve tried all possible roles in the team, such as driver, journalist, programmer, 3D designer and builder. From my experience, I can conclude that each one of these roles are equally important, since they all provide different things to the team, which are necessary to reach successfulness.”

Agustina Valdez

“I started as a driver when I joined robotics, but then my coaches saw a potential in me to become a programmer! It was because of my mathematical skills. At the beginning, I was scared because it was something new for me, but as time passed by, I found a passion for programming not only because I liked it, but also because of the patience and perseverance that it helped me develop.”

María José Ortiz

“In my first year in robotics, I was very interested in being a driver, since I didn’t think I could work in other roles. So I learned to control myself in every match, and also to work in group. However, I had to see myself as a programmer as well. I thought I wouldn’t understand it, but with a lot of practice and advice, my team and I were able to excel in programming, and even be able to go to “Vex Worlds.”

José Lajarthe

“When I first joined the robotics club I was introduced to the 3D designer role. I always liked 3D modeling and similar things. I experimented for a while and got the hang of it

soon. At first glance, it looks like a boring job, but for me it is entertaining to see how the robot gets progressively created in the computer. I have also helped other teams with their designs and taught them some useful things so they could carry on with their design on their own.”

Franco Ruffinelli

We would like to thank the robotics club for giving us the opportunity to believe and demonstrate ourselves that what was considered as “unthinkable” has been just a consequence of a cultural limitation for girls. What we’ve reached until now can be considered as a total success, or at least, this is the feeling that we’re experiencing now.