

901B LORD LAURENS

Beyond faces



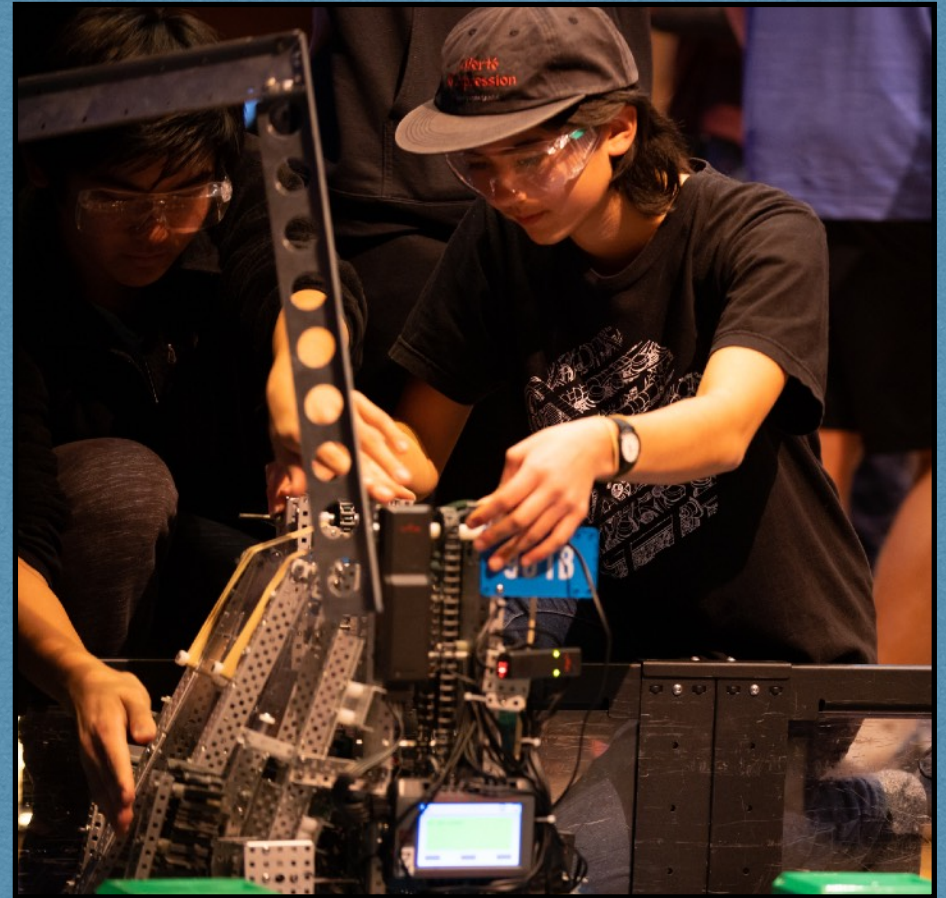
- Lauren Thorbecke, 901B Team Captain -

Discrimination exists everywhere. "Girl Powered," to me, is the embodiment of taking a stand against discrimination in all of its forms. Whether this means helping girls to take their rightful place in the world of STEM, or providing younger students with a jumping-off point in their learning, it always means fighting against allowing prejudiced thoughts or low expectations prevent people from reaching their true potential.

I am a female with a chronic health issue going into engineering, and sometimes, I worry that the odds are too much against me finding a job in the future. However, these circumstances shaped my perspective on the way I want to treat others. Before I started leading a team, I had a vision of providing the members on my team with a positive place to learn and grow—one in which everyone would feel welcome, included, and respected, regardless of their experience level, age, or personal circumstances.

As a team, we grew from an unrelated group into a smoothly functioning mechanism of combined minds; and more than that, we learned firsthand the impact that comes from always considering people beyond their "face value." While this year was the first we had heard of the Girl Powered initiative, we have embraced it. Having applied its vision in our team, we now aim to continue working towards an inclusive environment in our Robotics Club's future.

Welcome to our story.



Integration - September~October 2019

"The different skill levels we had in our team was interesting because it allowed experienced members to teach the less experienced; allowing them to apply new skills or knowledge when designing, building or programming. Due to the diversity we owned, I constantly observed the exchange of knowledge and opinions utilized to work out what would be the best way to attack the problem. I was surprised whenever we would design because my teammates would think of solutions which wouldn't have come to my mind."

-Joe Orii, Gr. 10

I stepped into the robotics lab on our first day with a rush of nervous anticipation. It would be the first time our newly assembled team was together.

What ensued was several weeks of chaotic, beautiful growth.

Our team consisted of five seniors, three sophomores, and a freshman. Later on, another senior joined, along with an eighth grader. Regardless of experience level, roles were distributed evenly. From day one, I challenged members to think for themselves, and to design, build, and ask questions.

Nobody, including myself, really knew what they were doing. However, this resulted in an even playing field: everybody was empowered to feel confident in voicing their opinions, sharing ideas, and asking questions. It was not long before everyone was showing up to every work session. And as the date of our first competition drew nearer with our robot not yet completed, they began to spend lunches and other free time to meet and continue working.



September

“The older, more experienced members are always leading the team, such as Lauren who more often leads with her actions than her words, but everyone would listen when she spoke. Our younger, not as experienced members came up with fresh, unconventional ideas to get us rolling. Our team has an all hands on deck attitude, and everyone is willing to do the dirty work. We often have people planning, building, and revising the robot simultaneously no matter their age or gender.”

-Ian Milstein, Gr. 10



November

Gradually, the value of our team's diversity became apparent not only through its impact on our team chemistry, but in how it shaped our team's personality. Every work session was accompanied by laughter and casual conversation along with unique ideas and harmonizing perspectives. Beyond only impacting the design itself, our differing views caused us to be fully inclusive of each other. I had been determined to treat every member of my team with equal respect; now, I was both receiving that same respect and seeing everyone pay it to one another.

This lack of expectational boundaries between our ages, genders, and experience levels enabled us to grow both individually and as a collective more than any team I had previously been a part of. We became able to have ten hands working in the same 18 by 18 inch space, with five unique voices offering each other support and guidance.

Accolade - November~December 2019

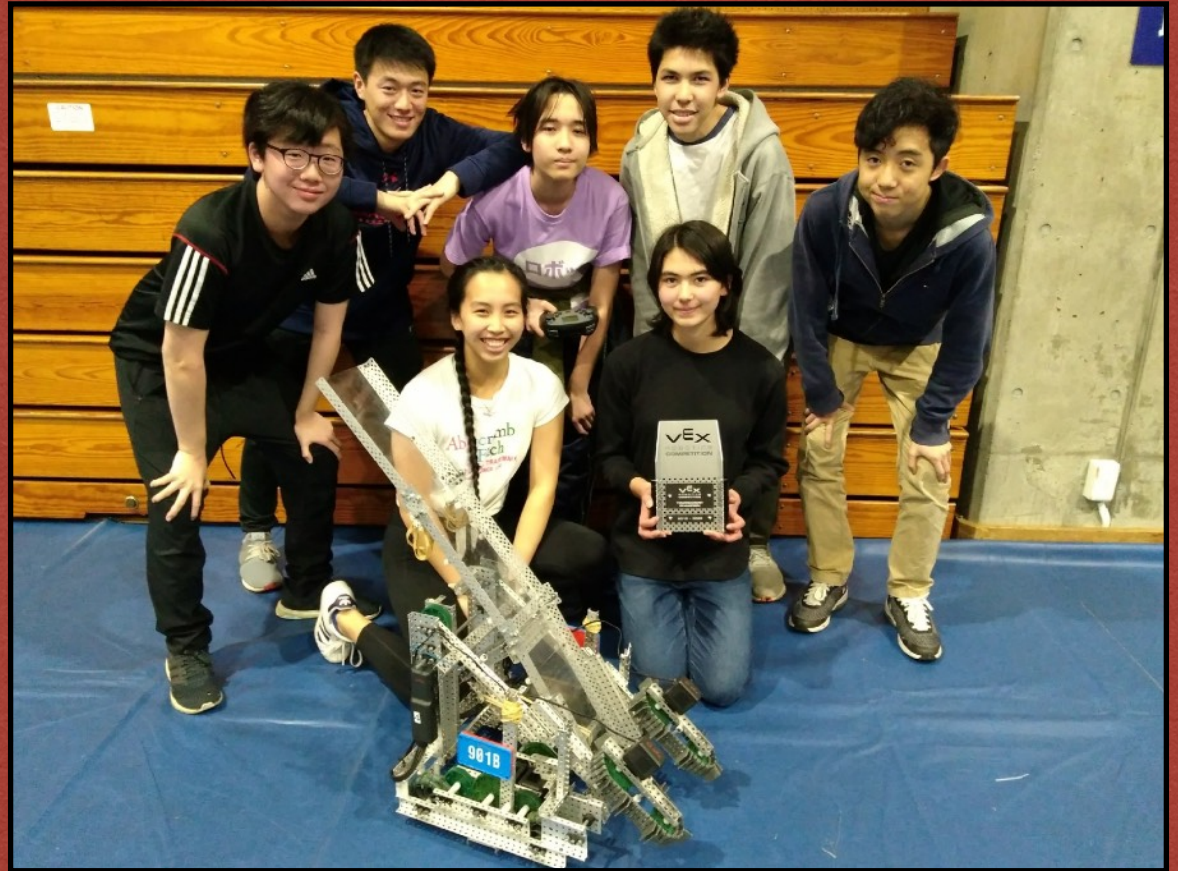
“I generally liked how everyone was treating each other as equals even with a distinction between grades. Even if you didn't have a clear role within the team, you were given a task to help with whatever would be needed at the time. And at least for our group, the girls made sure to balance out the chaos that would often occur between the boys. Overall, they made sure everyone felt included.”

-Sang-ha Park, Gr. 12

Our team's first competition went badly. However, the experience of trying and failing gave us the opportunity to discover exactly how much we had grown.

With three weeks until our second tournament, we decided to build a new robot from scratch. While it had taken us two months to assemble our first robot, we utilized our understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses to build a new robot in record time, and went on to win Tournament Champion at our Japan Nationals Vex Robotics Tournament.

When a vital component of our robot snapped in half just minutes before one of our matches, Sakiko, a girl who joined robotics this year, kept a cool head and was able to whip together a mechanical solution that enabled us to go on and win our next match 64 - 23.





“When Girl Powered comes to mind, I think about it as how we are inclusive as a group, and how we are able to collaborate well with others. One example of how our team reflected this is when they invited me to the team.”

- Noah Chie, Gr. 8

With one work week until our next and final competition, we stopped building and began focusing on drive practice and autonomous coding. During this time, we found out that an eighth grader, Noah, wanted to continue doing robotics, but that the middle school program had ended for the year. We invited him to join our team.

Not only has he been an incredibly eager and considerate member on our team, he saved us at our next competition, which took place two weeks after he joined. On the day of the tournament, our main driver was unable to compete. With no members who had drive practice on our new robot, Noah stepped up as driver for the day. He ended up driving us to Tournament Finals, where we lost by a close score of five points.

901B's Future - 2020 and Onward

"She insisted against "Lord Lauren" because we are not a one-person team, but rather a team made up of everyone of 901B. However, this statement led us to respect her more and decide to keep the name, but make it plural, "Lord Laurens"—showing that our team is made up of each member as Lauren said, but also lead by our amazing captain.

The team treated each other equally with respect, and nobody ever looked down on one another because of any external factors. The girls were also the ones who were trying to communicate with others, which helped everybody in our team to feel as if they are really a part of the team, which motivated the members to fully devote themselves to robotics. As the member of 901B who will eventually be captain of the team, even though Sakiko and Lauren are seniors and will graduate, I want future members who are girls because they played a major role in our team this year, and because I want the diversity that we currently have in our team to keep living on."

-Hugo Hasegawa, Gr. 10



Without any more tournaments for the rest of the year, we intend to build upon our goals of creating an inclusive environment by extending towards our community. We want to facilitate programs to recruit and help girls feel welcome within the club. We also aim to run workshops for new members of robotics, and for elementary and middle schoolers.

This past year has taught all of us an incredible amount—not only as roboticists, but as people and teammates. It has shown us the strength and power that exists when we combine our collective strengths and perspectives, and it has given us a passion to work towards a world that is beautiful and powerful in its diversity, one where everyone is accepted for who they are.

Thank You



Beyond Faces

by Lauren Thorbecke

Team:

901B Lord Laurens

Lauren Thorbecke, Sakiko Miyazaki, Sang-ha Park, Riku Wada, Kenichi Yajima, Joe Orii,
Hugo Hasegawa, Ian Milstein, Koya Weiss, Noah Chie

