

## Girl Powered: A Journey, A Dream, A Change - Written by the members of 3116P



*“The woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in places no one has ever been before”*

- *Albert Einstein*

The engineering world, notorious in history for being a male-dominated industry, posed a challenge for every aspiring engineer to enter. However, some of the most trialled and tribulated engineers were, in fact, women. Luckily, the tables have turned within the passing centuries, where the time for women’s acceptance within the workplace is now, shown by how women have been determined to demonstrate their knowledge and powerful working spirit within the engineering industry. With such a movement, women are finally receiving the same acknowledgement as any other societal group within the STEM workplace, and this is perfectly displayed through a model engineering work environment; VEX Robotics.

VEX Robotics is an extra-curricular platform for young people to express their knowledge and fondness for STEM through the designing of robots and utilising them within friendly, competitive tournaments that take place throughout the school year. Within VEX, an initiative called “Girl Powered” has been promoted in order to attract more girls into the world of engineering, and to promote equality for every girl who enters the STEM workplace, creating a healthy and enjoyable atmosphere for everyone, from every branch of society. Be it women, be it men, be it anyone; everyone deserves comfort and stability within their own workplace, because at the end of the day, no one should be judged on their physical attributes, but by the content of one’s character. With the aid of the Girl Powered initiative, we can make this concept a reality, and each member of our team can demonstrate a time where they have experienced the impacts of it first-hand.

### Millie’s Story: The Struggle

*“We can be heroes, just for one day,”*

- *David Bowie*

Within the engineering world, one may face many personal struggles that they must carry into the industry. Whether it be personal traumas, physical disabilities or perhaps learning struggles, these issues used to affect the chances of being warmly accepted within the STEM working community, especially for a girl. However, times change and so do we, as the industry becomes increasingly more accepting of those who may possess such attributes that can be a struggle in daily life, and within our team, Millie Gee has struggled with such issues in

the past.

Millie is our team captain, competitions manager and head builder within the team, holding many titles to her name that pose as a large responsibility for her as well as managing her somewhat difficult day-to-day life. Millie suffers from autism and a sensory processing disorder causing her senses to be heightened dramatically, often make her life difficult to work around. Years ago, a woman with autism would be cast aside in the engineering community, deemed as a cautious decision when letting her work, but that is no longer the case and as far as we are concerned, it will never happen again. Upon joining VEX, Millie was worried that she would experience confusion with many aspects of VEX that are the more logical, such as designing and building, and this was not aided by her worry that people would not accept her. Little did she know that she would be welcomed with open arms by her team and her peers within VEX, as well as being supported as an aspiring engineer. With this warm atmosphere, Millie was able to blossom at her own speed in whichever way she pleased whilst expressing her own intelligence through her three years within VEX. Now, Millie is working alongside her team and supporting them within their own fields of work including programming, designing and logbook preparation. Girl Powered has helped Millie feel more comfortable with herself, and has provided her with the confidence she needs to spread her wings and fly through life in the best way she can.



## Max's Story: The Escape

*“Are they trying to tell you something? You’re missing that one final screw,”*

- *Freddie Mercury*



A misconception about the Girl Powered initiative is that one can only be involved if they are female, and that is certainly not the case. Anyone can be involved with the initiative as it works on promoting the involvement of women within STEM, creating an equal and healthy work environment. However, sometimes being a woman is perhaps not who a person is at heart, and that is displayed by Max McNamara's personal experiences with their transition from being a woman to being a non-binary individual. Max is the head designer and driver within the team of 3116P, and has been competing in VEX for almost three years now. Max entered VEX as a young girl who struggled within society as an alternative child who was unlike many of their peers of the same gender, and this turned life into a struggle within their own mind. After Max's first year, they met several individuals who had

transitioned from one gender to another and this gave them the confidence to come out to their friends and family as a non-binary person. Many within their school were confused and perhaps opposed to their transition, often demonstrating discrimination against them, but VEX was not like this. VEX became a safe haven for Max, allowing them to be whoever they wanted without fear of judgement or hatred, and simply a place for them to show their passion for STEM in a healthy and safe environment. Additionally, with the aid from Girl Powered, Max could still support women in VEX without feeling as though they had to be one in order to remain an activist for women's rights. In order to demonstrate this, Max was featured in an online interview with a Girl Powered spokesperson that was later featured on the Girl Powered Twitter. This is proof of a new dawn within the STEM community, proving that no matter your gender, you can fight for equality and express yourself however you see fit.

### Cameron's Story: The Embrace

*"I could even learn how to love, like you"*

- *Rebecca Sugar*

The female empowerment that is being demonstrated within the VEX community is starting to bring all types of people together, allowing each person to be equal to the other despite one's differences. Through VEX and the Girl Powered initiative, our teammate Cameron was able to love herself and others using that power that she was able to harness. Cameron Walker is our key programmer, builder and scouter on the team of 3116P, and she radiates confidence and happiness wherever she steps. However, Cameron struggled identifying her own sexuality within life, and it was often a thing she would debate in her own mind, causing distress and confusion. From this, it would usually be shown in an incredibly anxious manner, and Cameron doubted that she'd ever be able to calm her nerves. Entering VEX in her first year of four, she remained curious to her sexuality until meeting others who were able to support her and comfort her whilst giving her the space within the school to understand herself in her own time. After her second year, Cameron came out as a proud lesbian to her peers, and with thanks to the Girl Powered initiative, Cameron was not judged for her sexuality and was shown as much love as everyone in VEX deserves. For everyone deserves happiness and respect in their field of work and passion, no matter your sexuality. Now, Cameron continues to work hard in VEX, sharing their love and passion for the activity among other members who may be struggling in whatever area of their life, be it VEX or otherwise. This demonstrates the impact that Girl Powered and VEX have; it brings others together, and allows everyone to spread the much needed love in this world.



In conclusion, the Girl Powered initiative has supported many girls within STEM, especially through VEX, where the help may be needed. It demonstrates how we are to not judge anyone based on their physical attributes and to come together over our differences as people, for that is the key driving source for the splendour within the world of engineering. For if everyone were the same, there would be nothing new, nothing exciting, and nothing worth celebrating. But as times change, so do we, and the world is becoming increasingly more varied in terms of people, and that is promising. Promising of a brighter, more precious, more exciting future for everyone. Girls, boys, engineers. Everyone.

*Credits: Max McNamara, Millie Gee and Cameron Walker*