## Women's Empowerment in Technology

By Alysa Serota

Team #6607A

## Girl # Powered.

## What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, Girl Powered?

Girl Powered is the support of your teammates, teachers, classmates, friends, and even family when trying out new things. Some of these things may include reaching outside your comfort zone, undertaking new or to-others-potentially-overwhelming responsibilities. Girl Powered means finding people you don't normally see in robotics and encouraging their enrollment/participation, providing them a welcoming, gender-inclusive environment where productivity and intuition can be came about. It is all about encouraging others—both boys and girls—to embrace a more diverse culture. Girl Powered encourages new experiences, diverse culture, and a more inclusive definition of what a roboticist looks like.

From a girl's perspective in an all-male robotics group, I can give you insight on how my robotics program used Girl Powered. While attending my first year at

Sweet Home High School, I was highly interested in what technology clubs they had to offer. To my surprise, my school only had two clubs that were devoted to technology and robotics, the Sweet Home Engineering And Robotics club (acronym being *SHEAR*) and the Women In Technology club. Though it may seem hard to believe in this day and age, both of these clubs were, unintentionally though evidently separated by gender. However, my teacher was thankful that a student (myself, a female) wanted to join his



club and not be forced into one such based on gender. Thus resulting in my self-chosen enlistment in the (then prior) all-boys *Vex Robotics* Club.

My group employed the ideas held by Girl Powered in our approach to robotics by embracing cultural differences. These include gender, age groups, ethnicities, religion, and more. We, without exception, encourage every participant in the club to attempt new roles, learn, and be all-inclusive. We attempted to reach out to our school and our community about robotics and women's importance in the engineering field. Our members placed signs around the school in specific areas where we knew they'd be seen. Alongside that, *SHEAR* (myself and my teammates) was interviewed on *ABC News* at our first *Vex Robotics* Competition held at *Niagara County Community College* (NCCC) explaining the importance of robotics and how these situations can prepare oneself for further education.

The Sweet Home Engineering And Robotics club (*SHEAR*) encourages attempting new and various roles in robotics. When enrolling in the club, you are asked some key questions—why you considered joining, your interests in robotics, and overall engineering, your current experience, and more to follow. Then you proceed with the examination of what you would like to learn and work on. Throughout the year, these interests may begin to change/develop and you are permitted to venture into your new and current interest. *SHEAR* will allow you to



switch in between what you believe you will be successful at until you find what you flourish and thrive in. These may be one or many things, therefore, you are allowed to actively participate in various roles. These roles include designing, building, problem-solving, programming, strategy, etc. Over the years every team member has been encouraged and has attempted to fulfill these roles. What I have learned from this experience myself, I can tell any joining girl or person, in general, will fit in somewhere and will be a great help in the end, even if they may initially feel discouraged regarding such. It takes different lengths of time for every person to discover what they will be successful with. Everyone plays a part; everyone is included in the team's success.

Learning is at its strongest when some diverse perspectives and voices are being shared and heard in settings of learning and development. Students, teammates, and more frequently perform better when they unite different individuals. For most associations, that implies interfacing with individuals who



have different shades of skin or sexual orientation. Notwithstanding, looking past race and sexual orientation to consider extra factors that expand incorporation is not just the right thing to do but it may also improve results as well Some of these extra factors/characteristics include may convictions, values, accepted practices, customs, and different qualities that are prominent in the group(s) to which they Individuals' points relate. of view, feelings, thought processes, and opinions are formed by the blend of these information sources making one's perspective different from one another. Consequently, this makes SHEAR (my school's robotics team) have diverse perspectives. Many of fellow my

teammates come from all around the world, believe in many different religions, frequently see diverse ideas, and more. These characteristics help them bring new ideas to the table and for us to have an overall diverse perspective than other teams. These diverse perspectives help us to see what can and what cannot be practical and new and innovative ideas that can offer an advantage. Diverse perspectives can also affect the team's chemistry. This is due to some having more of an open mindset while some may have a harder time accepting others' ideas. Overall, having diverse perspectives is highly important if one wishes to have a successful robot.

A good example of a role model can be anybody in a person's life you gaze upwards to or aspire to be. My STEM role model example is Luke Austin Schriver, a (now) first-year student going to Houghton College. Luke will also be studying abroad in London next semester, he has been acknowledged into the Houghton London Honors Program. I met Luke my first day after enrolling in my school's technology and robotics program. He had been so inviting, a genuinely good person, and an example to other people. Luke was the group leader, he generally stepped up and helped others first. Luke helped move the team as a whole, have a more comprehensive, inclusive, and diverse program. On my first day there, he was genuinely happy about there being a more diverse amount of individuals. Months later he expressed to me what he had thought when I walked into the room that day, "Our club's not really one that most girls go for, but it's also kind of not one marketed to them, so it's cool to see one such as yourself join and be such a prevalent member. You're an important part of the team and the insight you've brought this year has really helped the rest of us see new lights shed on previously 1-sided projects for the team." Luke was always open-minded to new people, thoughts, ideas, ways of development and processing, and so much more. Luke Shriver is my STEM role model, not only because of his work ethic but also his inclusiveness to everyone in the club.

Overall, Girl Powered is the support of your teammates, teachers, classmates, friends, and even family when trying out new things. Girl Powered means finding people you don't normally see in robotics and encouraging their providing enrollment/participation. them a welcoming, gender-inclusive environment where productivity and intuition can be came about. It is all about encouraging others-both boys and girls-to embrace a more diverse culture. Girl Powered encourages new experiences, diverse culture, and a more inclusive definition of what a roboticist looks like. This is Girl Powered, inspiring, encouraging, inclusive, diverse, and so much more.

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