Break The Stereotype, Be a Role Model

It's no secret that when it comes to jobs within the STEM industry, men hold the majority of the positions. This isn't because women are less likely to want to code, calculate, and



conduct experiments, but rather because girls are told from a young age that these are not the activities they should be interested in. This stereotype often starts from a young age and means that most girls won't even consider joining a robotics team by the time they enter middle or high school, and are far less likely to create their own teams. As a predominantly female robotics team, 45133B understands the importance of girls in STEM. There are a multitude of long term benefits of encouraging both girls and boys to pursue engineering careers from a young age

by fostering their growth and encouraging new ideas.

With this mindset, we know that being Girl Powered is more than just being girls in

robotics. Being Girl Powered is advocating for equal opportunity and resources for all girls in

robotics; celebrating the accomplishments of not only our team, but all girls; and working to create a space where girls feel welcomed and appreciated for their talents. When we think of the phrase Girl Powered, we think simply of one



word: equality. Each and every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their passions and turn their ideas into a reality. This starts with creating a space that is fueled by both open mindedness and a willingness to learn from each other. In a program that is predominantly male, we understand the importance of encouraging girls to try engineering classes and pursue their interests. Our own beginnings were not smooth, as we had boys in our program telling us



that we were not useful; that we were not meant to be building; and that we needed to stick to what they viewed as traditionally "female" tasks. Because of this, we promote the idea that there are no gendered roles in robotics; that roles are meant to be tried by all members; and that you should fill the role that you are best equipped to fill. This mindset assures people that they already

have the skills needed to be an asset to our robotics program. It also fosters the belief that we will continue to work together to build the lasting skills that come from time spent within STEM activities.

Throughout our collective years in robotics every member of our team has attempted a variety of roles. We continue to encourage each other to step out of our comfort zones and retry

roles we have already tried. On a three person team, each person has multiple roles to fill and oftentimes these roles overlap. A great example of this is the process of building our robot. One of our members enjoys researching and brainstorming ideas, while the other two prefer getting their hands on parts and going through a process of trial and error. Working together, we bring the beneficial elements of both strategies together to form the best compromise. When it comes to building,



where we feel our strengths lie as well as supporting roles. We have discovered through years



of trying and retrying tasks where we feel our skills are most beneficial as well as where our weaknesses lie. We take advantage of this knowledge by teaming up so everyone is able to do something that they both want to do and are good at. We are constantly switching and changing

the more targeted roles on our team such as strategy, outreach, and organization. Each of these are skills that any member of the team would benefit from having, and we strive to have well rounded members that can take these skills and continue to use and grow them long past their career in VEX robotics.

Working with a team that understands the value in diversity, strives to expand horizons, and is constantly searching for new and innovative ideas wherever we can find them is vital to

having the most successful team possible. By including every team member in every part of creating our robot we are encouraging a growth mindset and an environment where ordinary ideas have the opportunity to expand and become brilliant. Without this mindset, a team is setting themselves up for not only friction and



disagreements between their members but they are also limiting their potential. We see this same scenario within the STEM field as engineers, researchers, and scientists limit themselves and their teams to unrealistic expectations and fail to realize the benefits of having a diverse team that can approach a situation from a multitude of angles. When we come together as

people, set aside our differences, and give every person a fair opportunity to be part of the conversation, we are setting ourselves up for a promising future; one that will leave an impact for the generations that come after us.

We know the value of a legacy and understand the importance of contributing to a worldwide legacy that will influence girls for decades to come. Every person has someone they look up to and strive to be like, and by creating a workspace that focuses on inclusion and



amplifying the voices of girls of all ages, we know that we are creating a standard that will hold strong long after we have moved on from high school and into our careers. Our STEM role model is Reshma Saujani, the founder of Girls Who Code.

Saujani is a politician who noticed a tremendous difference between the number of girls and boys in coding and engineering classes along her campaign route and chose to step up and take action. By addressing this issue as a woman who does not hold a career in the STEM industry, she called greater attention to the discrepancy between girls and boys being

encouraged to pursue these roles within their schools. Actions such as hers, people stepping forward and deciding that they will not wait for someone else to ignite change within the world, that they will do it themselves, inspire millions of others to do the same each and every day. As members of 45133B, we strive to change our corner of the world for the better as much as we can in the hopes that girls in the future will



have the opportunity to join robotics programs and not have to face the same obstacles and

stereotypes that we did.

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