

What does it mean to show Girl Empowerment?

For forever women have carried either a stereotype or role in life that deems them less powerful than men or weak in some way. Now, women are looked to as a necessity on a team and as the world's next leaders.

At Patapsco one of our greatest achievements isn't an award or recognition of any sort, but it is the teamwork and dedication that each member brings with them to our team and our inclusiveness to anyone around us who would want to give robotics a chance. We are led by our team captain Rebecca McGreevy who not only has helped our team with her prior knowledge of the game but has shared her methods as to how she has been able to get Patapsco's team where we are today. Rebecca is accompanied by Tyler Resch who is the co-captain of the team and is sure to add any helpful information when applicable and has demonstrated his leadership skills to the team when Rebecca is not able to attend a meeting.

Our school as a whole is very diverse in ethnicities and personal passions. There is not a list of requirements or even needed experience to join our robotics team and because of that, we have been able to continue building our team. One of the strong ways we have attracted students to join our club is by having two very optimistic and welcoming sponsoring teachers and a supporting group of students behind them as they continue to show diligence and hard work throughout the school year to other students.

In the past year, while meeting in person, our team made sure to start everyone interested in the club with different roles to find which aspect of the team they excelled in or just felt more

comfortable with. Last year, our team was joined by two girls, Abby and Hailey. Both started by recording our progress with our team's robot and then after that went on to try out coding. Rebecca made sure to have two of the team's coders at the table to help them get down the basic commands and other key information to know when coding. From there, they got to experience working hands-on with the robot, building parts, and learning the different structures and aspects we needed to add to the bot, and ended up continuing their work on the team in that area.

At the beginning of this year, we were joined by two new members, Ella and Ethan. Even before the club had started meeting, Ella not having much experience with robotics put an interest in the club, dove straight into learning all there was about basic coding and even showed us sites each of us could visit to improve our coding skills. Ethan has observed a lot of the meetings to get to know everyone in the club and is still trying to see which area of expertise he would like to be a part of. Especially during these times, it can be hard to communicate and understand one's thoughts on how to proceed with the task at hand. This experience of being able to join a team of people that welcome everyone with open arms and finding a place on the team where you feel most comfortable has taught the team that everyone can excel in an area, they just need a chance to find what area it is.

As a competitive club, everyone strives to achieve the same goals and we all have a similar mindset going into competitions. Having a diverse group of students with similar outlooks and ambitions, but each with different ideas and thoughts on the design is one of the major aspects of what makes a team. In our group's case, having a female captain to lead our team and a male co-captain to add additional support strongly helped us with the design process

last year, and has continued to keep our team well balanced and put together going into this year and the new year. It has also benefitted our team that both captains are very welcoming and supportive and give feedback and any additional ideas to a design we might consider using. Overall, our team has worked exceptionally well together and continues to bounce ideas off one another in meetings. Our ideas have also played a major part in our robot's design because with each part of the design, one person has been able to add their spin to it and make it unique in their own.

Everyone has a role model that they either aspire to become or just admire. When the question "Who is your STEM role model?" was posed, Alekhya Pochiraju, Lene Vestergaard Hau, Lydia Villa-Komaroff, and Kathrine Johnson came to the team's mind. Each notable person has their own story and the way they came into their profession. In particular, Lydia Villa-Komaroff is a molecular and cellular biologist who was born in New Mexico. She was told in her first year of college as a chemistry major that a woman didn't belong in chemistry, so she decided to switch to biology. From there she attended Goucher College and received a Bachelor of Science and then was accepted into Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she completed her Ph.D. She has become such a remarkable influence to aspiring female scientists and was even awarded the Hispanic Engineer National Achievement Award and was given an award for Women of Distinction from the American Association of University Women.

In the words of one of the most influential female leaders in our government, "(Men and women) create new traditions by their actions if artificial barriers are removed, and avenues of opportunity held open to them." -Ruth Bader Ginsburg

To our team the phrase “Girl Powered” means hidden but strong leaders., not running from problems, finding solutions, and making it clear that women have the power to do anything and think the unthinkable.

Credit:

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