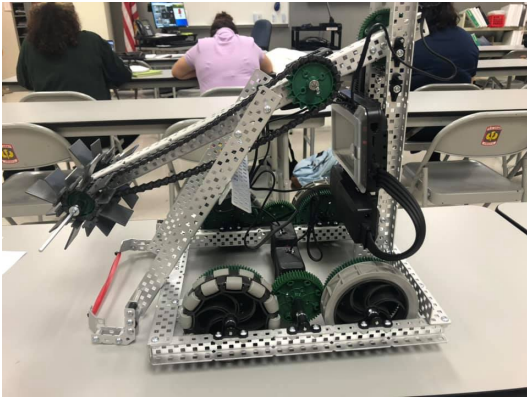


Diversely Girl Powered Code as Ice



Sparky Jr. ↗



Code for Unit 4 ↗

81% of robotics engineers are males. That means out of 45 people, only 9 are females. Despite having equal qualifications, women are less likely to pursue a career in robotic engineering. It is even a lower percent for women of color that are hired into STEM jobs. So it is vital in this day and age to represent girls in STEM, and my team is Girl Powered because we work to operate in that way.

It is the first year for robotics in our battalion and it started off a little odd due to COVID-19 restrictions. I was excited to learn new things about robotics and programming once in-person school started. Over the first few weeks of class, I was able to gain my voice a bit more. I usually don't talk in class, but it gave me a way to give suggestions and share my opinions. We were all excited after completing the Computer Science Fundamentals course because we knew it meant we would start building the robot. We had four people working together to assemble our robot; and we were all girls. It was such a personal accomplishment to me that I was putting together brackets and drilling in screws. I felt empowered and like I could pursue a mechanical job if I really wanted to. At one point I realized, wow, we are all girls doing this! It was so cool to recognize that and I'm happy to be in such a motivating program.

Our team consists of five people: Clouse, Taylor, Nieto, Rinehart, and me, de Chabert. We are all going to change roles for each competition, so we are figuring out how to succeed in each area. Rinehart (the only male) is solely online, so he is doing mostly programming for now. For the rest of us, we have driving, engineering notebook, building, and also programming split up between us. I remember I was scared when I had to log in the engineering notebook because I thought my grammar had to be perfect, but I'm figuring it out.

Diversity in perspective changes helps my team work together more efficiently, but not just in robotics related things. Last week we were discussing whether to keep our crunch bot or to switch it for a claw bot, and we voiced our own opinions, tested each option out, and went with the working answer. Another way our varying perspectives have helped us bond is when we get to talk to each other about things going on in our lives. It is good that

we can talk to one another, especially in this time, and it helps us feel for one another and understand where we are coming from. I have faith that our team will succeed because there are different people making up our team and working together will always produce great results.

I learned that working from a team is important from my aunt, who is also my STEM role model. She is an engineer at Boeing and helps to make sure aircraft are functioning properly. She has even worked on plans for the presidential helicopter, which is really amazing. It was her charismatic attitude that got me into aeronautics and wanting to learn all about flight processes. She inspires me to keep going even if you might feel alone, because she is a black female working in a field that is mostly white males.

I hope that one day I can talk to girls and women of all ages and backgrounds about STEM and jobs that might open up if you choose that career path. That is what people did for me, and it got me motivated and showed me the various possibilities I could choose for my life. It is critical that we let young girls know that a career in a STEM field is even an option. So they don't give up on their dreams before they have a chance to experience them.

Our team is Girl Powered because we represent girls in STEM, and we operate in a way that allows everyone to engage and have their voice heard. It is influential to me that I am having the chance to participate in a team that has instructed me and has funded the equipment, because not everybody has that luxury. This experience has made me grateful and I hope to get the opportunity to let girls know that they have the option to flourish, even in a typically male-dominated arena.