

**VEX VRC – 2021 / 2022**

**Girl Powered**

**Team No. 84294A**

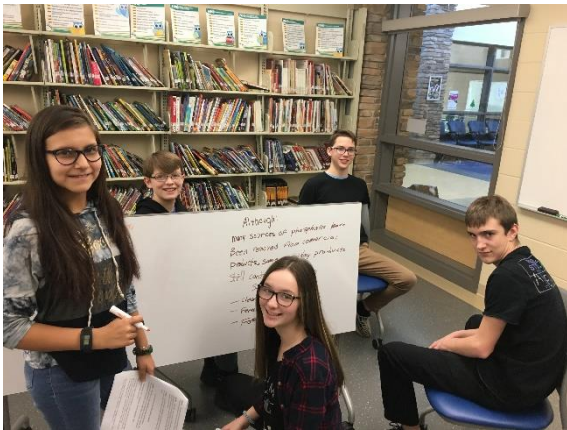
**Notre Dame du Sault**

**Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada**

**Team: Ella, Gabrielle, Liam, Luc, Nicholas, Tieran**

## There's no 'Gender' in 'Team'

Our team is like a car. Every single car part is put together to form a machine that can succeed if fueled. The girls in our team are the fuel. With our help and guidance, we manage to get the car to drive. And let me tell you, this car is heading straight for the world championship. No stops!



Upon searching the definition of “team”, we determined that it is defined as a group of individuals working together to achieve a mutual goal. There is no talk of a group of only boys or girls working together, rather a group of people who all contribute due to their various abilities. ‘Girl Powered’ means that we girls do not stand out in a crowd, we are not judged on our choices based on gender and that we are looked at as an equally valuable member of the culture, of our team. Often times, as girls, we get asked “Why did YOU join robotics, isn’t that a boy sport?” or “You shouldn’t be in robotics, why don’t you do cheerleading or something more girly?” Is this simply a judgment based on gender, and not our ability to perform as well as boys do?

We girls are said to be made of sugar and spice and everything nice, but that just means you have not met the girls on our team. We can do so much more than sit still and look pretty, as some say. We joined robotics, knowing we had to be strong and defend our choice against others who did not understand. And let me tell you, we are back here again, our fifth year in a row.



Our team is only 33% girls. This means that on a team of six, only two of us are girls and although it may seem little, we are the reason our team is going to succeed and make it far in 2022. Girl power has changed our team for the better.



Girl power is well reflected in our team's approach to robotics as we are the real conductors on our team. We give constructive criticism to team members on just about everything we do in order to improve, yes, you might say girls have a different approach and point of view on many aspects. We make sure that our teammates stay focused and keep their eyes

fixed on the "bigger picture". To be more successful at competitions, our team members have all tried our hands in each role in VEX robotics.

We recognize we have our strengths and weaknesses and with practice we grow together, and we would decide as a team what we are best at and what our roles should be. We mainly work on our role and in our spare time, we work on improving our skills in the other roles as well. Since it could be very useful to have someone else on the team who is also experienced in the same skill, in the case of any problems, we have back-ups. Girl power isn't only recognizing how strong girls are, it's also recognizing that the boys in our team are just as strong, and that we need them just as much as they need us. We are a team and in order to succeed together, we all need to feel appreciated and included.

Diversity changes my team's chemistry. In the past, the team consisted of all boys, and there was no girl power. The boys now say that girl power has really changed our team for the better! They feel the team is now more focused, respectful and organized with the team girl power. Perspective changes our robot design, so since we have different ideas, we decided to combine them and created six different prototypes, then tested them to see which prototype components will be used to build our ideal competition robot. We added and changed to our robot many times to get the amazing competition robot we have today.

Many people may think that VEX robotics isn't a typical sport for girls. The truth is, VEX robotics is not only about driving robots, it is so much more, and we are constantly learning new things that can help us to become more successful in the future. Two years ago, my team had the chance to compete at the VEX Robotics World Championship competition, and it was an honor and a wonderful experience. Worlds has been a dream come true for my whole team. We met so many teams from all over the world and got to learn all about their countries and about them! Our team is very lucky to have team members who can speak different languages including English, French, Polish and Spanish, due to such abilities, we had amazing interactions with the other teams. However, we all also spoke the language of robots together.



My team would have never been able to make it as far as we have today if it was not for our coach and STEM role model, David Spacek. Many of our team members' siblings have also been in robotics with Mr. Spacek in the past, which both helped and inspired us to join robotics. We now also understood how big an impact he has as incredible engineer. He pushes us to learn by working as a team and to try new things. What sets him apart is that he teaches us that "winning" is not the main goal. The main goal is that we learn as much as we can, so that in the future, we succeed. If we win, that's a bonus.

We are inspired by VEX robotics to keep the learning moving forward. Mr. Spacek helps make our team and the VEX program at our school more inclusive by inspiring us to share and pass down what we know with the younger teams. The goal is that they can then learn and then they can pass it down themselves.

This year, our school increased the size of the VEX program and added two more VEX groups, consisting of younger kids from grade four to six. Now there are even more girls joining VEX, inspired by the model of our example. Today, our teams are almost fifty-fifty girls and boys and none of this would have been possible without the help and the inspiration of our coach David Spacek.

