

Girl Power

By Nadia and Kelly

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When I hear the phrase "Girl Power " many things come to mind. However, the first thing is hearing my team number called in our Division at VEXIQ Worlds telling us that we won the Inspire Award. Just being at Worlds was a truly magical experience: being in the Parade of Nations, seeing all the competitors from around the world, being behind the United States Flag with spotlights and a crowd cheering us on. I saw then that all the competitions, all of the practices, all the sleepless nights finally paid off. It really showed that perseverance leads to success, that you should never give up. Honestly it was truly inspiring, showing us girls that we can do anything we put our mind to.

Now that I am in an all girls VRC Robotics team, 3 years later, I want to make sure that I can help other girls achieve and experience the same success I had. Now our team gets to try all aspects of robotics that are there, such as coding, building, and driving. To split up the work, to make sure no one is overworked, we give a role to each team member that maximizes what they're best at. Nadia can program blocks and typing so she does most of the programming, Kelly is a great driver so she and Nadia do the driving. Ximena and Fatima have never done robotics before but that doesn't stop them from helping out with building and problem solving.

To make sure our team stays diverse and reflects on the school image, our team lets anyone on the team such as different races and genders. We let anyone on our team even if they're new to robotics as long as they put in the effort and are willing to work.

There are many different women in STEM who have shaped the way we live today, but the main STEM role model for our team is our coach, Ms. Albaeck. She has helped us through it all. When I just started robotics in 3rd grade, going to a different school and not knowing a thing, she let me and my mom come to their team practices and learn from the team members there. Through the 6 years since I met her she does everything to help my team with robotics, such as holding events at the school to make sure there's money for our program, applying for grants, paying for the competitions, buying the robots and parts. She also has some competitions at the school to make sure we don't have to travel that far and that we're familiar with the place to make us more comfortable with it so the competition is a little less stressful. Now retired after teaching for 30 years, she still comes to all our practices, competitions, and if needed, she even drives us to these events.

When I was on other teams mostly with guys it was hard to be taken seriously because of the pushback from the other teammates. So I feel an all girls team is important because it shows other generations younger or older that even if they are girls, they are smart and can have a bright future in STEM.

My years in robotics have shown me that even if people try to discourage us and drive us away, we are empowered. We can do anything we put our minds to, we just have to put in the effort. It has also shown me that opportunities are there for us girls, just by doing Robotics.