

Girl Power Matters

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All of our lives, the word “girl” has been used as an insult. “You build like a girl,” “You code like a girl,” and “You drive like a girl” are all phrases we have heard in the past. Even compliments have become backhanded because so many people feel the need to add, “for a girl” at the end of them. “You are a good driver . . . for a girl,” “You are a good coder . . . for a girl,” and “You are a good builder . . . for a girl.” What difference does it make if we are girls? What makes our skills less competent compared to a boy’s?

When we hear the phrase “Girl Powered,” we think of the confidence and strength of a girl. We think of a well-built mechanism made by powerful girls. We believe that our robot is “Girl Powered.” We put our passion and dedication into our robot. When we were elementary school engineers, we were discriminated against many times. We didn’t have a very important role in our team. We want to be role models to the younger female engineers and show them that if they shoot for the stars, they can achieve anything, no matter what anybody else says!



Our school team doesn’t only consist of girls; however, we all come from different perspectives, and we come from all different walks of life. Recently, we visited our local elementary schools to listen to the ideas of the elementary robotics team members and give them our recommendations and advice as well. We were also accompanied to the elementary schools by students from our local high school, Crown Point High School. They assisted us in troubleshooting any problems they encountered, and we worked with them to show our creative designs to the elementary students. While we were presenting to the younger grades, we advised them of possible solutions to enhance their robots.

Our team members rotate the roles of designing, building, driving, programming, and strategizing on occasion when it is necessary to do so. We also know that some of us have certain strengths and weaknesses compared to one another, yet we all participate in every aspect of robotics. We faithfully communicate feedback to one another as team members and try to incorporate each other's ideas as we progress through the project. Nobody in the group tries to control anybody’s achievements; we all share it equally. From this experience, we all learn to collaborate better with

everyone, which, in turn, helps each member to feel more comfortable with one another. Thus, we also learn true respect for each other. For example, if a team member needs to give a somewhat negative critique, then she feels comfortable doing it in a polite manner to truly show help without making the other teammate feel inferior.



We have different roles in the team to help us succeed. Prastuti is the best driver on the team, and gets a lot of points during matches. Caitlyn programs our robot for it to function properly, and Saumya programs the autonomous. Ceila, Bailey, and Lillian build our robot, and Saumya also designs/decides the mechanisms needed. When we have a problem, our diversity of perspectives helps us look at the problem from a different angle to figure out what is causing the issue, and ultimately what will solve the problem.

When our team is stumped on a tough problem, we like to think about other inspiring scientists such as the female mathematician, Katherine Johnson. She used her mathematics skills and helped NASA send astronauts to the moon, much like we are using our mathematical skills to build our robot to score as many points as possible. She faced many gender-based obstacles but persevered through all of them. With a group of other women, she solved many difficult mathematical calculations needed for spaceflight. Her team helped humankind achieve “the impossible.” Just like how Katherine Johnson is a role model to many young women, we hope to inspire other girls to believe in themselves and shoot for the stars to achieve their dreams.



Katherine Johnson