Chairman's Award - Team 1296

Print Close

2016 - Team 1296

Team Number

1296

Team Name, Corporate/University Sponsors

Special Products and Manufacturing/The PTR Group/Park Place/Innovation First International, Inc/Texas Workforce Commission/Cyphre, Inc. & Rockwall H S

Briefly describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants with special emphasis on the 2015/2016 year and the preceding two to five years

Team 1296 encourages its students to develop an interest in engineering beyond the FIRST season. Our program provides the opportunity for students to experience real-world engineering projects within time constraints, and enhance their organizational skills. For many, their experience with Team 1296 has not only positively impacted their lives, but has also helped define them. Many eagerly return as mentors.

Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on your community with special emphasis on the 2015/2016 year and the preceding two to five years

Over the past years, our main focus in the community has been impacting our local elementary schools. By working with FLL teams, we have formed bonds that teach kids how interesting robotics can be. Recently, an F4 tornado hit our area and caused 600 families to be displaced. We turned our practice space into a center that distributed supplies to victims. Our team also collected school supplies for local high school students who couldn't afford them.

Team's innovative or creative method to spread the *FIRST* message

Several of our team members visited our local Boys & Girls Club to educate young children about robotics. During our visit, students took turns driving the robot and experienced the atmosphere of a FIRST competition. We helped run a middle school VEX tournament, where we spoke to students about joining FIRST teams when they started high school. In cooperation with Microsoft we helped lead two fall camps, one especially for girls, where they were able to gain firsthand knowledge about robots.

Describe examples of how your team members act as role models and inspire other *FIRST* team members to emulate

For the past few years, our team has implemented a "buddy system" in order to teach incoming freshman what FIRST is all about. Each new team member is paired with a veteran who guides them and teaches them about their specific duties on the team. We want each of our members to gain knowledge from their initial year so they are able to teach the next generation of members. This previous fall, we hosted a mock kick-off in order to prepare new members for the following season as well.

Describe the team's initiatives to help start or form other FRC teams

Although we have not started any new FRC teams in the past five years, we work hard to maintain the relationships between the local and national FIRST teams we helped to create in the past. Recently, we hosted a party bringing together multiple FIRST teams. We celebrated the kick off to the 2016 season with teams 148 and 3310; it was a great chance to promote unity between local FIRST teams and see which team had the best dodge ball players!

Describe the team's initiatives to help start or form other *FIRST* teams (including Jr.FLL, FLL, & FTC)

Team 1296 has inspired younger engineers by starting FIRST LEGO Leagues at all 13 elementary schools and all 3 middle schools in our district. Our team put these programs in place and volunteer at FLL competitions. This past year, we focused on mentoring Stevenson Elementary, the newest school in our district. With the help of our mentors and student mentors, we were able to help Stevenson win 1st place overall and 1st place robot at the Dallas Regional.

Describe the team's initiatives on assisting other *FIRST* teams (including Jr.FLL, FLL, FTC, & FRC) with progressing through the *FIRST* program

Our team has made substantial efforts to assist FRC teams and FLL teams in our area. In Rockwall ISD, we mentor 14 teams involved with the First LEGO League program. For three years, we have been able to send student mentors to these schools to give children a hands-on experience. Two years ago, we helped establish the newest FLL team in our district at Stevenson Elementary School. The practice field we set up in our shop is available to local teams to practice

on before competition.

Describe how your team works with other *FIRST* teams to serve as mentors to younger or less experienced *FIRST* teams (includes Jr.FLL, FLL, FTC, & FRC teams)

Team 1296 has assisted many teams during competitions when they are in need. In 2014, at the Oklahoma City Regional, we helped Team 2723, Team Rocket, build their robot from scratch and program it on the day of the competition. We also assisted them with programming it. Our president devoted his entire day to ensuring the prosperity of their team and acting as their human player. Team 1296 not only wishes to succeed on the field, but show gracious professionalism off of it.

Describe your Corporate/University Sponsors

SPM welds, cuts, and bends sheet metal to aid us in building our competition robot each year. This season, Interstate Batteries has graciously gifted us with 12 brand new batteries. RISD has helped our program grow by implementing robotics teams at every level. Cyphre, Park Place, The PTR Group, North Central Ford and IFI all sponsor us monetarily. Fishhead sponsors us with t-shirts and hoodies.

Describe the strength of your partnership with your sponsors with special emphasis on the 2015/2016 year and the preceding two to five years

Our sponsors know the importance of the FIRST program for the future of Team 1296's students & the growth of their companies. We work with engineers from our sponsors, including IFI & L-3 ComCept. These engineers mentor throughout the year, teaching students fundamental principles of design & a myriad of skills that are vital to various STEM professions. Our sponsors' goal is for us to understand the skills needed to be successful. They not only sponsor our robot but our future success as well.

Describe how your team would explain what *FIRST* is to someone who has never heard of it

FIRST is an intense robotics competition, where young minds are pitted against each other to engineer solutions to ever-evolving problems. Each season students must build a robot to tackle a new fun and challenging game. After the game is unveiled, teams have six weeks to design, build, and drive a robot that, with any luck, will dominate the competition. Teams are pushed to cooperate and apply the skills needed to thrive in a STEM-dominated world. It's like sports for your mind!

Briefly describe other matters of interest to the *FIRST* judges, if any

Team Captain/Student Representative that has double-checked this submission.

Nadia Whitehouse

Essay

Our high school defines "RockwALL-IN" as whole-hearted commitment to everything that we do. Whether we are training our team members of tomorrow through mentoring FIRST LEGO League teams, providing assistance to tornado victims rebuilding their lives, or founding our high school's chapter of the Society of Women Engineers, Team 1296 is RockwALL-IN. By making efforts to improve the skills of our team members, providing enriching robotics activities to the kids in our city, and by volunteering in our community, we are creating a bright and sustainable future for Rockwall, Texas.

Since our creation in 2004, Team 1296 has made significant strides bringing in new students through camps and presentations. We hold introductory classes at our shop during the off season so new members and students interested in joining our team can be exposed to the activities in a typical build season. The programming, electrical, hardware usage, and safety skills that our new and returning team members learn during this time are crucial to their later success on our team. Our team member Gabe, stated, "Learning component identification and application, what stuff is called and where it goes, helped to prepare me for the build season."

Our new facility has been very beneficial to the team as it is significantly larger than our high school's robotics lab. It has also opened doors for the team to offer opportunities to more groups and charities in our area; this larger space has given us the capacity to help our community in greater ways. For example, during the Microsoft YouthSpark Live event held in Dallas, TX, we partnered with the Robotics Education and Competition Foundation to build 50 donated VEX IQ robots for the participants' use. It allowed us to act as a storage and distribution center for donated goods during a very difficult time for our community.

Our facilities however do not only benefit our team. We are able to create a full sized FRC field and collaborated with local teams, 148 and 3310, to build all of this year's field components. At kickoff this year, we issued an open invitation to all attending teams to visit and utilize our practice field. We currently have plans for 148 and 3310 to take advantage of our offer and practice toward the end of build season, and expect other teams to do the same.

We work to ensure that our team's spirit of generosity reaches beyond the walls of our facility. At the 2014 Oklahoma City Regional, our team met members of Team 2723 and discovered that they were extremely short-handed, lacking mentors and resources. The Full Metal Jackets swarmed to help this team rebuild their robot from scratch. In addition to this, our team president volunteered to serve as 2723's human player for the duration of the competition. This team was extremely grateful and the resulting friendships continue to this day, with members of 2723 supporting our team members in robotics and throughout many other extra-curricular activities.

Our team spirit has been acknowledged recently by three Rockwall and Dallas newspapers that also followed our team's journey to the 2015 FIRST Robotics Competition Championship in St. Louis, Missouri. These articles drastically increased the community's awareness of our team this season, which helped drive up team membership. Over 70 people came to our informational meeting during the 2015 offseason - almost twice the number we had the previous year. We've appreciated the opportunity to help our community recognize the exciting aspects of robotics, and increase the amount of students participating in FIRST.

In 2013, our team sadly lost an alumnus in tragic circumstances. After this terrible occurrence our team decided to dedicate the entire season to his memory by partnering with a local suicide awareness group, Hanna 4 Hope. We attended Hanna 4 Hope's annual 5K with our team's 2014 robot, showing solidarity for the event and supporting the participants.

For the last two years, Team 1296 participated in the Refugee School Supply Drive, collecting school supplies and backpacks for local high schoolers from disadvantaged homes. This drive, founded by the team, is essential to these students' abilities to effectively learn in our community. The school supply drive was a great opportunity for the team to come together and assist students in need. With our team's help, these students now have a better chance to achieve their goals in education, because their basic supply needs have been met.

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We support our community not only through local initiatives, but also when our local area needs us most. December 26, 2015 proved to be a life changing day for our community. An F4 tornado hit the neighboring cities of Garland, TX and Rowlett, TX killing 9 people and displacing almost 600 families. Nearly every member on our team knew someone affected by the storm; in fact, a few members of our team live in the affected communities. In the days following the disaster, Team 1296 sprang into action by doing whatever we could to help. Most notably, we offered our shop and practice facility as a distribution center and helped to sort 4,000 square feet of items that were donated to the victims. After the items were sorted, student team members packed up boxes in moving vans, as well as their own vehicles, and brought them to a larger distribution center closer to the affected area. In this difficult time, Team 1296 did whatever possible to mitigate the effects of this disaster.

In 2015, the president of Team 1296, Emma, and a leading team officer, Nadia, founded the Rockwall HS Chapter of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). This club is dedicated to helping young women achieve their goals of becoming engineers as well as learn more about engineering. Through the team's efforts, girls in grades 9-12 that share a common interest in STEM are able to gather and discuss their passion. With the help of 10 team members, we started a battery recycling program in order to prevent toxic waste from getting into landfills. We are making strides to lessen our school's environmental impact through sustainable engineering solutions. This push has assisted and galvanized 30 girls at Rockwall HS to become interested in a typically male-dominated field, and is visibly making an impact on the battery disposal at the school.

Team 1296 has made it our goal to help kids in our local elementary schools discover and continue to have a passion for math and science. Since our teams founding, we have helped start FIRST LEGO League teams at all of the 14 elementary schools in our district. For the past two seasons, we have directly mentored Stevenson Elementary School, the newest school in our district. This eager group of young students was able to win 1st place overall and 1st place Robot at the 2014 Dallas Regional. We are proud of their hard work and perseverance, which perfectly exemplify what it means to be in FIRST Robotics. These students know that spending their Saturdays mentoring younger kids is worthwhile, especially when we are making a difference in STEM education awareness in our community. Helping these young minds grow is exactly why Team 1296 will continue to mentor these students in the future.

Over the summer of 2015, in conjunction with the Stevenson Elementary School FLL team, the Full Metal Jackets helped to run a robotics camp at the local YMCA. Ten of our students mentored to the 3rd through 8th grade students involved in the camp, assisting them in building LEGO Mindstorms NXT robots. Over 30 kids were involved in 2015 and we aspire to continue this camp in future years to increase the number of students interested in STEM in our community.

In August and October of 2015, 20 of our team members traveled to the Irving Convention Center, where we helped to put on a Microsoft YouthSpark Live event. This event is designed to foster confidence and a love of STEM. Our volunteers worked with children from ages 8 through 18 and spent time helping these students to program VEX IQ

robots. We worked to develop the students' interest in robotics and engineering, hopefully inspiring them to continue on to pursue opportunities in these areas. In addition, we worked closely with Microsoft in their DigiGirlz event in Dallas alongside underprivileged female students, educating them about opportunities for women in STEM. These girls learned how to build VEX IQ robots and were also exposed to programming and taught engineering basics.

Team 1296 also donated time and hosted a VEX Robotics Competition. We performed multiple tasks, such as acting as judges and referees, and providing last minute mentoring to students. We were also able to talk to the kids about high school robotics and encourage them to further pursue opportunities in STEM fields.

Our Teams definition of RockwALL-IN is to show commitment in everything we do. We are ALL-IN when we teach our team members electrical and mechanical skills as a foundation of knowledge for a STEM related career. We are ALL-IN when we run VEX tournaments at our local middle school and LEGO Mindstorms camps for elementary school students. We are ALL-IN when we volunteer at events throughout our community. This mindset shows our team's focus and builds our character. Because of this commitment, our team is stronger, and our community is more involved with STEM. No matter what the activity or opportunity, Team 1296 from Rockwall, Texas in RockwALL-IN.

2016 - Team 1296

Picture 1

2016 - Team 1296

Picture 2