Chairman's Award - Team 4091

Print Close

2018 - Team 4091

Team Number

4091

Team Name, Corporate/University Sponsors

The Carol Morgan School

Briefly describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants with special emphasis on the 2017/2018 year and the preceding two to five years

There is something special about the DRIFT community. When you become a part of it, you are changed for the better. It teaches you life skills that will be useful in the future such as responsibility, teamwork, and time management. It teaches you how math and science can be fun. It teaches you how there is always a community willing to accept you. It teaches you to persevere and always do your best. When you join DRIFT, a part of it finds a way into your heart. That part stays with you for life.

Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on your community with special emphasis on the 2017/2018 year and the preceding two to five years

DRIFT has been revolutionizing 'tech' in the D.R. since 2012. Our school has implemented 3 Maker Spaces as well as AP CompSci, robotics classes, and has raised their overall support towards the team. We have changed how our community sees STEM. More people have started following engineering careers, and because of our spreading revolution, more private schools around the country have started their own teams. FLL's rapid growth has inspired over 100 teams to participate in our Caribbean Regional.

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

FIRST's message is to recognize STEM. During the past 7 years, we have spread this message through the creation of FRC teams both in and out of our country, through increasing the availability of STEM courses in our school and through introducing FLL to our country. Most important of all, however, has been bringing technology to underprivileged kids throughout the country. Our passion towards robotics and STEM speaks for itself. We are the forefathers of a technological revolution in the D.R.

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

Indigo Knights, a member of our team, holds no leadership position, yet she is one of the people that is most looked up to on our team. Her dedication to the team and its ideals are unparalleled amongst others. If there is a Saturday meeting at 9 in the morning, Indigo is already there at 8:30 ready to work. Indigo is only one of many members others on our team we strive to emulate, and while there are people we emulate and look up to, we all come together to form a community based on support.

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

As an FRC team, we know it is our duty to inspire innovation and an affection for STEM in our society. As the first FRC team in the Dominican Republic, we have taken this responsibility to the next level. Within our short time of 7 seasons as a part of FIRST, we have started 2 more FRC teams in the Dominican Republic,Team FORCE 4707 and Team FREEDOM 7231, and we've also helped found the first FRC team in India, the RoboKnights.

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

As the first team in the Dominican Republic, we know we have a responsibility to spread the message of FIRST. Within our school we have helped found 3 FLL teams. We have also helped bring FLL as a whole to our country through the founding and hosting of the FLL Caribbean Regional, to which we expect over 120 teams to attend this year. This year, we are also introducing Jr. FLL, and while we have not managed to introduce FTC, we have introduced courses to our school which use its past challenges.

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

When DRIFT started in 2012, FIRST was unknown in our country. Fast forward to now and the country has 3 FRC teams and hosts the FLL Caribbean regional with 120+ teams. We have sponsored 8 of them. Our members volunteer and referee at the FLL Caribbean Regional and one of our members has even traveled to India to help a very prestigious school start the first FRC team in the country and we are also in the process of helping a school in Nicaragua start its own team.

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)

This year we started the third FRC team in the Dominican Republic, FREEDOM. Their programming team had no previous experience with programming at all, but through a series of lessons with our programming captain they have learned a lot. Since the 14-15 school year our middle school has had an FLL course. We also started the FLL Caribbean Regional in 2015 and this year 120+ teams will attend. The FLL teams are all mentored by our team and the 6th grade team was invited to the FIRST Championship.

Describe your Corporate/University Sponsors

"We have worked with a professor from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute, as well as mentors from national universities who have guided us through the Building Season process to help us make a more efficient robot. This year we've also worked with marketing mentors from FLUXAR that have helped us improve our team structure and effectiveness. These mentors have also helped us spread the message of STEM and FIRST throughout our country more effectively, causing a more significant impact. "

Describe the strength of your partnership with your sponsors with special emphasis on the 2017/2018 year and the preceding two to five years

"Since the beginning of the school year we start searching for sponsors. This year we have been able to receive sponsorships from many large companies in our country. We have also received sponsorships from various companies multiple years in a row such as Castillo & Castillo, Alvarez Sanchez, and Banco Popular. These sponsors send us their logo to put on our team shirt as well as on a banner to promote their company. We also visit their companies and give demonstrations of what we do."

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

In our eyes, FIRST is a vehicle for change. FIRST is an opportunity for those interested in STEM to improve themselves. FIRST is an opportunity to learn life-long skills. FIRST is an opportunity to test yourself and your ability to find solutions to problems you encounter. Most importantly of all, however, FIRST is an opportunity to find and develop your passions.

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

FIRST is not just about robots. It is a way to help others. We collaborate with many clubs in our school to achieve this goal. One of our main collaborations has been with Tech4TheFuture, a club that teaches underprivileged kids necessary computer skills. Another initiative of ours is integrating students from underprivileged backgrounds in our team. We pay for these students to be on our team and travel with us. These efforts are what we believe to be great examples of what FIRST is about.

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

Jean Christian

Essay

7 years ago, a small group of students at our school made a choice. A choice to devote themselves to something which previously had been unheard of in the Dominican Republic. A choice to start FIRST in our country. A choice to use this as a vehicle to better their country, our country. A choice to start a revolution. Those students understood that FIRST is not just a robotics competition. They understood that FIRST is simply and succinctly about using STEM to help their community grow. About the symbiotic relationship between having fun with robots and inspiring others. About the changes they could make.

Starting a revolution is no small task. As Sara Raasch so famously wrote, "Even the strongest blizzard starts with a single snowflake." The "maker" revolution has taken our country by storm, and we were the snowflake that set it all off. But just like the strongest blizzard starts with a single snowflake, a single snowflake can not be a blizzard by itself, and we were quick to realize that. We toured the country, presenting FRC to many schools, yet we kept encountering complications. And still, we pushed through. After all, we told ourselves, you cannot make a revolution with silk gloves. You must be willing to sacrifice. To spend long nights working on a robot to take to demos. To spend countless hours planning and executing an outreach event. To go through so much in hope that something, no matter how small, will come from it. Yet we unanimously agreed that no matter what had to be done, we would do it, because in the end it would be worth it. Worth it to see our country change for the better.

Finally, we found a school willing to adopt the program and in 2013, the second robotics team in the DR was born. Team FORCE 4707. Our work had finally paid off, and the revolution had commenced. In their first year, we gave 4707 the guidance we lacked the previous year, and led them to great success. Knowing still that this would not be enough, we have kept advocating for FIRST programs to many schools in our country, and this year, we introduced another FRC team to the Dominican Republic, Team FREEDOM 7231, which consists of not a single school, but an amalgamation of students from 5 different schools around the city, really bringing together students from many different backgrounds and having them work together towards a common goal. Although we so far only managed to inspire the starting of two other FRC teams in our country, we know there will be another team joining us next year from another city in the country. In the summer of 2015, our former team captain at the time visited her homeland of India. In India, she visited a very prestigious school in New Delhi, DPS RK Puram. At DPS RK Puram, she presented the FRC program to the administration, and thus the first FRC team in India, a nation of 1.3 billion with a growing interest in the tech sector, began. Since we knew from experience how hard it was to be a rookie team alone in a new country, we, through video calls and a series of manuals written by students, in a way, "mentored" them through the process.

While we have inspired 3 FRC teams to be created, we also know that FRC is not the only FIRST program, and that we can take advantage of that to educate younger children and inspire them from a young age. With this goal in mind, we set to work. Today we are glad to say that 4 years and a week ago, the first FLL kickoff in the DR was held, with 15 teams from around the country, and that this year there are over 120 teams registered to participate in the FLL Caribbean Championship, which is hosted by us, refereed by us and Team FORCE, and judged by many parents from our team. Yet as much as we love FIRST and its mission, we have seen that it is not a program every school and every child can participate in, especially in such an impoverished nation. So to be able to truly spread STEM to everyone, we have partnered with many organizations in and outside of our country. We have partnered with the Autoferia Popular, the biggest car fair in the Dominican Republic, which tens of thousands of people attend every year, in order to get time allotted to us on the main stage, where we were able to speak about, and demonstrate our robot to everyone in attendance. We have also worked with the Peace Corps here in our country and taken Lego Mindstorm kits to the places they work in and shown the kids they work with how fun robotics can be, and how much of a future it promises. Our school heavily promotes community service, and we have partnered with many of the community service clubs in our school such as Project Girl, a club aimed towards educating girls who live and work in shantytowns, Tech 4 the Future, a club aimed towards teaching underprivileged kids necessary computer skills in this day and age, and Kids With Vision, a club aimed towards giving children a voice through the use of disposable cameras. We have also worked with a non profit in India, Nai Disha, whose focus is on community development through education, a goal similar to ours. We partnered with them and provided them with the tools and knowledge to educate the children they work with in STEM, and open that door for them.

Essay - page 2

As the forefathers of a revolution, however, we also realize that change comes from within, and if we ourselves are not able to grow, then we cannot expect to help others grow. Our programming team has gone from having no programming knowledge and seeing a functional autonomous as an unattainable goal to an extensive amount of programming knowledge and being a source of knowledge for other teams, constantly helping those in need. Our school has gone from reluctantly allotting us a small room for our activities to giving us the biggest classroom in our school, building us a building for heavy machinery, purchasing us a CNC router, building 4 makerspaces in school, and implementing many programming and robotics courses, including AP Computer Science A. We have also, since our second year, been adopting public school students from all around the Dominican Republic (the Ministry of Education only receive less than 4% of the national budget, most of which is misallocated) into our team as full-fledged members, even paying for their travels to our regionals. These students are selected through a program a bank here has called 'Dale Un Chance.' These kids from this program are high academic achievers, and through the program are attending college with scholarships. We also focus a lot on personal growth, nurturing skills such as teamwork, perseverance, problem-solving, self-management, and responsibility. Through us, our team members have found their passion and have been able to bond easily with others who share those same passions. Many of our members have joined our team with no true calling and with the single purpose of joining the team to check another box on their application. Of those members all who have remained in the team have found a passion for robotics and engineering, and have become some of the most hard-working members, many going on to take on leadership positions.

In our country there is a stigma against pursuing a career in STEM and we have taken on the task of breaking this. Former team members after high school study all ranges of STEM majors from engineering to computer science. Not to mention the students we adopt from 'Dale Un Chance', who also continue their careers in STEM after and because of joining our team. We are a developing nation, but we are confident that with the encouragement of STEM education, our country can rise like a phoenix through the ashes of controversiality. New conversations are happening in every corner of this country, and dare we say, it's because of us. We are the new revolution, and we intend to feed this furnace until our country rises.