

## Chairman's Award - Team 1296

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2018 - Team 1296

**Team Number**

1296

**Team Name, Corporate/University Sponsors**

Rockwall Makerspace/Innovation First International, Inc/Special Products and Manufacturing/The PTR Group/Texas Workforce Commission/Rockwall Ford&Rockwall H S

**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**

We encourage students to develop an interest in STEM beyond the *FIRST* season. Our program provides the opportunity for students to experience real-world engineering projects within time constraints, & enhance their organizational skills. For many, their experience with the team positively impacted their lives, and helped define them. Numerous members choose college majors based upon their team-related experiences. Some alumni return after college to mentor the new generation of Team 1296.

**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**

Over the past 3 years, our team's main focus is being known in our community. Our team members mentor 1 elementary & 5 middle school teams. In addition, we participated in over ten local robotics competitions as judges, referees, inspectors & held offseason event. Recently, our area has had several families affected by natural disasters; therefore, our team sent supplies when the community was in need - 2015 EF4 Tornado struck Rowlett, 2016 Louisiana flood victims, 2017 Hurricane Harvey victims.

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

Our team participates in an annual school event, Fish Camp, we demonstrate our robot and handout flyers that explain our team and what *FIRST* is all about. We have several social media pages where our team posts updates throughout the robotics season in order to keep our community informed. Other outlets promoting STEM activities include being featured on local news stations, newspapers, magazines, and live presentations hosted at local events.

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

We have a reputation for Gracious Professionalism. In 2017, our unit helped several non-alliance teams-14 at regional competitions & 7 teams at Houston Worlds. Students, with mentor guidance, assisted teams by helping with mechanical, electrical, software issues, & providing spare parts to teams in need. We instill G.P. in our younger teams showing how they can impact other teams at competitions. Several members traveled to Washington DC, & talked to 2 senators & 3 congressmen about STEM funding

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

This last year, a local high school reached out to our team, inquiring about our robotics program. They have toured our facility and we have provided information on how our FIRST robotics team works. In addition, we have invited them to offseason events to experience FIRST and the aspects of the teams. Attending these competitions allowed them to visit the pits and see multiple robots and talk to other teams broadening their knowledge of STEM and FIRST.

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

The success of Team 1296 brought awareness of STEM throughout our community, resulting in our school district realizing the importance of STEM at younger grades. The district provided FLL kits and started after school robotics programs at all 14 elementary schools. Team 1296 members mentored younger students giving them the opportunity to experience robotics before joining the high school team.

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

In 2013, our team attended the Oklahoma City Regional. At the start of the competition, our members came upon another FRC team, exasperated because of their incomplete robot. We helped this team build a robot to compete, and lent a team member to be their human player (with FIRST's approval). After this occurrence our team continued to help teams in need and established a reputation for G.P., winning two awards and assisting over 20 teams in the 2017 season.

**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)**

In 2017 at the Brazos Valley Regional, we met a rookie team that was having issues with their robot and unable to compete. We sent our 'fix-it crew' known as "The Swarm" to assist them. With mentor guidance, we help them resolve issues and be able to compete. The team won the Rookie Inspiration Award and advanced to Worlds in Houston. Having issues at Worlds, they found us and we sent the "The Swarm" to help them with resolving issues so competition was fun at Houston.

**Describe your Corporate/University Sponsors**

In addition to providing funds, since we outgrew our high school's lab, one sponsor provides a facility for us to build, practice and use tools. Other sponsors provide team shirts, while another powder coats our robot parts. We keep our sponsors informed of how the team is doing through social media. During the summer, we take thank you gifts our sponsors can display at their facility that the students make themselves.

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

Each summer during offseason, students make plaques with that year's team picture to deliver to our sponsors for them to display at their business. We take pictures at their facilities and post to social media bringing awareness to our sponsors and building stronger relationships. We update our sponsors through sending them weekly videos along with posting on social media. At the end of each season team members write thank you notes, telling the sponsors how much we appreciate them.

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

FIRST is an opportunity for students to take STEM to the next level by learning various skill sets throughout the build season including: mechanical, electrical, software usage and presentation & essay writing. The program provides real world experiences for students and provides scholarships and information on engineering schools to encourage students' interests in pursuing STEM degrees.

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

About 5 years ago, 1296 representatives presented an idea to build a career center to the Rockwall ISD School Board. The planning for the career center began in 2015; our unit has helped refine the curriculum, review class content, and select equipment for this academy and it will be open to our district's students this fall. In addition, our team members average 45+ hours community service and accumulated over 2,800 hours in the 2 years.

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

Hannah Cowgill

## Essay

### I. The Mission of 1296 -The Full Metal Jackets

Team 1296, the Full Metal Jackets, strives to be Army Strong - to represent the best of FRC, the best of our community, and the best of each and every soldier in our unit. Whether training our troops of tomorrow through mentoring robotics programs, hosting an all-girls tournament, advocating for STEM education & funding, or helping to lay the groundwork for our school district's STEM Center, Team 1296 aspires to be all we can be. By making efforts to improve the skills of our team members, providing enriching robotics activities to local residents, and volunteering in our community, we are creating a bright and sustainable future at our base in Rockwall, Texas.

### II. Boot Camp

Since our founding in 2004, Team 1296 has made significant strides recruiting new troops through camps and presentations. We hold introductory classes at our practice facility, known as the Bunker, during the off-season so new troops interested in joining our unit are introduced to the activities in a typical build season. New and returning members learn valuable skills in fields such as programming, electronics, machine tools, OSHA regulations, and CPR training - all of which are crucial to the success of the robotics season.

### III. Deployment

In the summer of 2017, troops traveled to Washington D.C. to attend the 2017 FIRST National Advocacy Conference. Only 40 teams from around the country attended the conference, making Team 1296 the only representative from Texas. Our troop took part in a three-day conference that consisted of training videos and speakers, which prepared them for meetings with U.S. Senators and Members of Congress on Capitol Hill. Our troop talked to the staff of two senators and three congressmen about STEM education and funding, specifically in regards to the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a bill passed in December of 2015.

On December 26, 2015, a disaster hit our community. An EF4 tornado struck the neighboring cities of Garland and Rowlett, killing 11 people and displacing almost 600 families. The bunker served as a distribution center and helped to sort 4,000 square feet of donated items for the tornado victims. This inspired our team to continue to help natural disaster victims. In 2016, we sent supplies, such as canned goods and water to Louisiana flood victims. In 2017, our community supported Hurricane Harvey victims in Houston by sending 8 trailers of supplies, including water, canned goods, and clothing items.

After our unit lost an alumnus in 2013, we began partnering with a local suicide awareness group, Hanna4Hope. Last year, our unit participated in a suicide awareness seminar. This cause demands elevated student awareness, and therefore we invited other FRC teams. The training taught teams to identify peers at risk and provide resources for those in need. Since 2014, we have attended Hanna4Hope's annual Color Splash 5K. The Full Metal Jackets bring robots for demonstration, show our support for the event, and reach members of the community.

### IV. Uncle Sam Needs Us

Since our team's founding 15 seasons ago, we have worked to bring recognition to STEM education and our unit. Our troop have accumulated over 2800 hours of community service since June 2016, in which 55% were dedicated to STEM-related activities. Our efforts inspired Rockwall ISD to create after-school robotics programs at all 14 elementary sites and all three middle schools in our district. Our hardworking troop mentor one elementary and five middle school teams, supporting our community while exemplifying what it means to be Army Strong. Team 1296 has volunteered at ten local robotics competitions since 2014 by judging, refereeing, and inspecting. Our unit continues to mentor younger troops, creating new avenues for future members to join our team each year as freshmen.

Over the summer of 2015, the Full Metal Jackets assisted in running a robotics camp at the local YMCA. We mentored over 30 students from third to eighth grade, guiding them in building LEGO MINDSTORMS NXT robots. In 2016, we partnered with CORE, a local "Teknasium" company, to run robotics camps for advanced robotics students. In addition, we mentor 2 robotics camps at Rockwall ISD's ROCK (Reaching Our Community's Kids) program.

About 5 years ago, 1296 representatives presented an idea to build a career center to the Rockwall ISD School Board. The planning for the career center began in 2015; our unit has helped refine the curriculum, review class content, and select equipment. Our troops are featured in a district-wide promotional video for the new center. The Dr. Gene Burton College and Career Academy is becoming a reality - the principal is hired, teachers are being assigned, and the center will open in the fall of 2018.

### V. We Can Do It

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Along with four other FRC teams, our unit created a new off-season robotics tournament, the North Texas Tournament of Robots. We participated in several meetings regarding scheduling, promoting the event, and coordinating the volunteers. In the fall of 2018, Team 1296 is adding a Friday FRC all-girls event, STEM Gals. The event will emphasize that STEM is for Gals as much as GUYS. This gives female team members a chance for leadership roles in all aspects of the competition, from MCing, refereeing, judging, and learning about the different aspects of FIRST. Our troop is spreading the word of this event throughout Texas and neighboring states to attract more participation. We seek to encourage more women to consider STEM pathways by promoting many of the exciting opportunities that STEM has to offer.

Team 1296 encourages our community to participate in STEM by attending and helping with local events, such as the 2017 Dallas Girl Powered Kickoff event hosted by Texas Instruments. Troops taught coding and led design challenges to promote problem-solving skills to over 100 young girls in the DFW metroplex. Our troops furthered their commitment by taking the "Girl Powered" pledge. Members wrote why they are "Girl Powered" and posted photos of the pledges on social media, allowing our community to join in the initiative by posting their own statements. We believe the "Girl Powered" initiative inspires global equality; Woodie Flowers said it best, "Technology needs women more than women need technology..."

In the fall of 2016, our team partnered with Secure the Call, an organization that provides free 911 emergency-only cell phones to domestic violence victims. Our unit is motivated by the knowledge that we are helping families in need. To date we have collected 244 cell phones toward the initiative.

In 2015, Team 1296 students founded the Rockwall HS Chapter of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE). This subunit is dedicated to empowering young women to achieve their goal of becoming engineers. Through the team's efforts, girls in grades 9-12 learn about and share common interests in STEM. Our SWE chapter started a battery recycling program in order to prevent toxic waste from leaching into Texas landfills. We host biweekly meetings and members teach lessons about various STEM topics such as binary and civil engineering.

In addition, we worked closely with Microsoft through their DigiGirlz event in Dallas alongside underprivileged female students, educating them about opportunities for women in STEM. These girls learned to build VEX IQ robots and were introduced to programming and basic engineering skills. We worked to develop the students' interest in robotics and engineering to help inspire them to pursue STEM opportunities.

### VI. Branching Out

We work to ensure that our team's spirit of generosity reaches beyond the walls of our Bunker. At the 2014 Oklahoma City Regional, our troop encountered rookie FRC Team 2723 and discovered that they were extremely short-handed. Our unit assisted this team in rebuilding their robot from scratch and volunteered to serve as their human player for the duration of the competition. Since then we have made our unit known for Gracious Professionalism. In the 2017 build season, our unit helped several non-alliance teams, including 14 at regional competitions and 7 teams at the Houston World Championship. Students, with mentor guidance, assisted teams by helping with mechanical, electrical, software issues, and providing spare parts to teams in need.

Our team has helped our community by volunteering 2,800+ hours since June 2016. On average, each team member volunteers 45+ hours per year. One member of our team has earned the Presidential Service Award for 3 years and was recognized at the Texas State Capitol, bringing awareness to our unit and FIRST. Our unit was given the opportunity to present their Chairman's presentation to our Texas Representatives and staff at the State Capitol in Austin. Other outlets promoting STEM activities include local news stations, newspapers & magazines, and live presentations hosted at local events. We appreciate the opportunity to help our community recognize the exciting aspects of robotics, and increase the amount of students participating in STEM. Through our extensive outreach efforts at over 150 events, we have spread STEM to more than 2,400,000 people over the last four years.

### VII. Never-Ending Mission

The Full Metal Jackets' definition of Army Strong is to show commitment in everything we do. Team 1296 encourages its troops to develop an interest in STEM beyond the FIRST season. Our program provides the opportunity for troops to experience real world engineering projects within time constraints, and enhance their organizational and communication skills. We are Army Strong when advocating for STEM funding at both national and state levels. This mindset demonstrates our team's focus and builds our character. Because of this commitment, our team is stronger, our district is stronger, and our community is stronger. Through these activities, together, we are Team 1296, and we are Army Strong.