

## Chairman's Award - Team 353

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2019 - Team 353

**Team Number**

353

**Team Name, Corporate/University Sponsors**

Trio Hardware/Parents of POBots/Plainview Old Bethpage Central School District/B & Z Steel Equipment Co. Inc./Gershow Recycling/Shoreline Beverage/Dr. Raphael Strauss Allergy & Asthma/Unitron/Advantage Hyundai/Bella Vista Pizza/St. Thomas Aquinas College/Atlanta Colon & Rectal Surgery/Zebra/Intelligen Power Systems/Sr8Smiles Orthodontics&Plainview-Old Bethpage/Jfk High School

**Briefly describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants with special emphasis on the 2018/2019 year and the preceding two to five years**

The FIRST programs have truly helped our members find a passion for STEM, 95% of our seniors are planning to pursue STEM careers in college. Many of our members have found ways to help FLL and FLL Jr. teams in their free time and volunteer at FIRST events.

**Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on your community with special emphasis on the 2018/2019 year and the preceding two to five years**

Our team has extended our reach to almost every school in our district. We have gone to places in our community to demonstrate our STEM is fun activities. We have had a large increase in young FIRST participants due to the new teams that we mentor.

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

We make a name for ourselves in the community, so the POBots name is recognizable and people are eager to do events with us. We have an influence on younger generations by working with middle schools and girl scout troops.

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

Our members show that the POBots are hardworking dedicated students that should be looked up to. We make sure to include people of all ages, backgrounds, and genders in our demonstrations to show that anyone can be a POBot.

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

Many of our alumni support rookie FRC teams and current students have created and personally mentor younger teams with the potential to evolve into FRC teams.

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

90% of POBots has had a personal experience in volunteering to help FLL teams, some will ref at events, some offer presentation advice, and some teach technical skills to 5 different FLL and FLL Jr. teams

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

We have many close relationships with other FRC teams in the region and maintain a policy of sharing whatever resources we may have with them. We also are constantly mentoring middle school teams.

**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)**

Our events include other young FLL teams, giving them an opportunity to showcase their abilities on a larger scale and giving them a chance to meet other FRC teams and see what they are working towards.

**Describe your Corporate/University Sponsors**

The POBots draw sponsors from colleges such as St. Thomas Aquinas and large corporations such as Altice and Zebra. These companies decide to invest in us because they see that we are special and want to help us live up to our potential.

**Describe the strength of your partnership with your sponsors with special emphasis on the 2018/2019 year and the preceding two to five years**

To the POBots, our sponsors aren't just through donations. We connect with our sponsors through relationships strengthened over time. For example, with Zebra, we offer members and past robots to do onsite demonstrations and in return, they have given us extraordinary mentors and more. We value our sponsors not just by the money they donate, but for their time and assistance as well.

**Describe how your team would explain what *FIRST* is to someone who has never heard of it****Briefly describe other matters of interest to the *FIRST* judges, if any****Team Captain/Student Representative that has double-checked this submission.**

Juliana Diaz

## Essay

Superman can't save the world— he isn't real. He symbolizes feelings of pride and goodness that he instills in people to save the world. He is a shining example, a paragon of morality, serving to inspire those who can save the world to want to do so. Similarly, not everybody can build something that changes the world. Some lack the resources, the power, or the skills to immediately create something new that changes the world for the better. However, everyone has the potential to inspire someone or to help others find their potential, even if they cannot find it on their own.

This is what we aspire to be. Not necessarily people that can change the world— though maybe we can. We want to be the people to inspire others. We hope to serve as a shining shop on the hill. We want to make the bright blue POBots shirts, emblazoned with our logo on our chests, represents how we help people. We are not perfect. But, every time we see a middle schooler given a sense of belonging during a time of uncertainty, every time a student is excited to wear that blue shirt for the very first time and make something of their own, and every time one of our alumni introduces STEM to a child for the first time—we know that we are already heroes.

We know that sounds like a corny, hopeless ideal that all teams strive for, but few can truly attain. Throughout the years, we have seen time and again the influence of our ideology. It is nowhere clearer than at the events where we show our smallest members just how big the future can be. This year, we returned to Maker Faire, with activities enjoyed by over 750 kids. We tailored all-new activities towards young children that showcased the different parts of FIRST, such as programming and the design process. The activities promoted critical thinking and a deeper understanding of what FIRST is about.

The whole weekend was filled with smiling kids and parents alike, but there was one moment that really stood out to one of our members. Her name was Anna. She came towards the end of a long, tiring day when everyone was ready to wrap up. Ever trying to put a smile on the kids' faces, we made a show of the programming game we created. As she advanced through the activity, she became increasingly excited and interested. She had setbacks; after all, she could not have been more than four years old. But at the end, in light of what she accomplished, her face moved us more than we could describe. As Anna and her parents were about to walk away, one of our members walked up to them and said "Excuse me," he said, "we are with an organization called FIRST, and there is something called FLL Jr. I would love to talk to you about..."

It's very possible, in fact likely, that Anna will not remember Maker Faire. But if she does become a part of FIRST, goes on to cure a fatal disease, or brings basic necessities to those who lack them, she becomes a hero. Then in our own small way, even if we do not know we did it, we have become heroes. Someday, someone we help will become a hero, in that way we too will also be heroes.

Our team's continuing quest for this heroism created the district's first-ever FLL Jr. team called the Stratford Space Explorers, team number 15176. One of the members who works closely with the team has this to say about them "They had the imagination, I was able to help them make their imagination a reality and have the power to build it." This rookie team's incredible enthusiasm serves as a remarkable reminder, not only of the heroic power of FIRST but of the heroic power of the POBots. The power to unite, teach and inspire those who would not have such an incredible opportunity otherwise.

It is our hope that in just a few short years, these kids will have been so inspired by their time in FLL Jr., that they will want to honor us by joining of our middle school teams. Some of which bear our name. Just like the FLL Jr. team, these kids will be proud to wear our names on their chest. Our four middle school teams amaze us every week when we go to mentor them. If we were able to write the most eloquent thing we could about them, it wouldn't hold a candle to what they can show you in just a thirty-minute conversation with them. While only two of our teams moved on, we are immensely proud of all of them for the amazing work they did. For everything that we taught them, from how to use math blocks in programming to presentation pointers, they taught us just as much. They serve as a perpetual lesson of the love and trust in one another, that are central to FIRST core values. While winning is important to our FLL teams, their biggest goal they strive for is the ability to join their heroes and become members of our team.

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These students would not be the first ones to be proud of the POBots name. An integral member of our team first encountered the POBots in middle school. He joined the Omega POBots at an extremely difficult time in his life. He had just lost his grandmother with whom he was very close. He recalls that some of his earliest memories involved trying to build contraptions out of books and pillows to help her with the disabilities that plagued her. On one occasion, he became so upset during class he couldn't finish the walk to the guidance office and leaned against the lockers in tears. Over times things did get better and he found himself in therapy; finally happy to talk about something, joining a middle school robotics team. It took some time to find a place on the team, but eventually, people finally gave him a chance. A few individuals on the team gave him a chance to shine and to him, these people will always be heroes. But there was another group of heroes. Ones that wore blue shirts with red logos and sometimes even wear capes. If the people who gave him a chance in the middle school were heroes, then these people were superheroes. When these superheroes visited the middle school, they did not just bring their robots, they brought something to aspire to, the hero that they want to be. Unfortunately a few years later his team folded. But the next year, this member got an opportunity to restart the team that had meant so much to him and to be a hero to another generation. He made it his mission to teach these kids everything he knew. Especially the values of FIRST that meant so much to him. When he graduated, he had promised to mentor them and bring as many high schoolers as he could. The POBots have been able to uphold this promise. It finally became time to join the people he had once called superheroes. When he received his POBots shirt upon joining the team he went outside to the POBots trophy case and for the second time in his school career leaned against the lockers and cried again. This time it was tears of joy.

It made us proud to see the same member who wept when he got his POBots shirt get to share the same moment with the generation that he trained. It is this cycle of veteran POBots welcoming the new that symbolize why our alumni are so important to us. If it weren't for these alumni reaching out to us, we would not have been able to take on the responsibility of paying it forward. Giving back is our responsibility, it would be wrong of us not to do this, not to advance the future. Anything else would be wrong. It's our responsibility to use our position of privilege to help others. It's not a service, it's our moral duty; anything else would be selfish.

The alumni have fulfilled this duty by spreading their passion to not just the next generation of POBots, but to a variety of areas that would not have had the amazing experience that comes from being involved in a FIRST organization. Three of our alumni created FRC team 5030 when there was no nearby FRC team to mentor after they graduated. These heroes were also key members in the creation of the Central New York Regional which team 5030 later went on to win this event created by their heroes.

Perhaps the most fulfilling part about participating in this event was the POBots alumni that encountered our booth at Maker Faire. Long out of high school, these two former members are now married with a child who participated in the activities herself. They explained how the POBots had a lasting effect on them and that their daughter will be involved in FIRST.

Nothing better fulfills our mission than our dedicated alumni. These former POBots are heroes in countless ways. They help our club not only by volunteering their time and expertise, but by also giving the students people to look up to.

It's the little things that matter. It's the generation of kids that will grow up to know how to work with each other. It's a little kid following in our example. At EAN, every single year, it is another chance to get another little kid inspired to change the world. If not them, they will inspire someone else to change the world. This year's Maker Faire has given us one of the most fulfilling moments in the club's long 20 years. Our booth happened to attract two POBots alumni. Long out of high school, these two former members are now married with a child who participated in the activities herself. They explained how the POBots had a lasting effect on them and that their daughter will be involved in FIRST. It is the children learning respect and love for one another, inspiring them to want to build things for the good of all people, not just themselves.

These small, deeply touching acts may not be noticed by everyone, but they hold the most power to make someone feel so much better.

The POBots not only believe in the amazing things we can do but the amazing things that future generations can do if we give them the chance. In this way, we can all make a difference in the world simply by having the ambition and the desire to do so. In this way, we can all be superheroes.