

## Chairman's Award - Team 5242

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2022 - Team 5242

**Team Number**

5242

**Team Nickname**

?? RoboCats ??

**Team Location**

Dallas, Texas - USA

**Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants within the last 3 years. This can include but is not limited to percentages of those graduating high school, attending college, in STEM careers, and in *FIRST* programs as mentors/sponsors.**

FIRST has consistently impacted our alumni's futures and what they want to study. Within the last three years 100% of our alumni have graduated highschool and are currently pursuing a higher education. Of the alumni from the past three years, 100% plan to be an active member of the FIRST community and over 20% have come back within this season to aid new team members. Including this year's future graduates, over 86% have planned to pursue a STEM degree.

**Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.**

The team consistently tries to impact everyone in the community, from young elementary schoolers, to huge corporate businesses. We have been able to consistently create connections within this community from creating annual STEM summer camps with TBK Bank, to being able to host this year's FTC Regional Championship. So because of our ability to impact the community, we have been allowed to showcase how the team is about more than just robots.

**Describe the team's methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the *FIRST* message in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative. How does your team measure results?**

The Robocats have always held "Gracious Professionalism" as a part of our mission and have focused on maintaining it as the status quo, even throughout the complications COVID-19 provided. Outside of our multiple FTC and FRC teams, the Robocats have consistently hosted LEGO MINDSTORMS camps during the summer since 2018. These summer camps have served as excellent settings for us to explain the values and merits of not just FIRST, but through being a member of the STEM community as well.

**Please provide specific examples of how your team members act as role models within the *FIRST* community with emphasis on the past 3 years.**

For the past 3 years, we have done our best to represent the FIRST community by inspiring over 100 kids in our Makerspace Camps, encouraging dozens of girls through our Society of Women Engineers club and serving as mentors to the 5 FTC teams at our school, one of which is new and was made possible through the efforts of our team. Our main goal is to inspire the younger generation and to provide a platform in which they are able to prosper as upcoming active members in the STEM community.

**Describe your team's initiatives to Assist, Mentor, and/or Start other *FIRST* teams with emphasis on activities within the past 3 years.**

Throughout these three years, we have been able to start 3 new teams. This includes two FIRST Access teams, which provides an opportunity for students with disabilities to interact in the field of STEM. This team is the first of its kind within the Dallas Independent School District. In addition to expanding our horizons, we have added one new FTC team to our existing four, one of which is solely female students.

**Beyond starting teams, what initiatives have you done to help inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators? What results have you seen from your efforts in the past 3 years?**

We began running camps like Studio Bella Presidents Day Camps and STEM Summer Camps. These camps were started in order to get kids motivated to pursue a stem career. Initially we only used LEGO Mindstorms to show kids the world of engineering and computer science. As our funding increased, so did our activities and now we are able to show more to kids such as 3D Printing and CAD. As a result of our efforts, we've had a number of students go on to join our robotics team, or even start their own.

**Describe the partnerships you've created with other organizations (teams, sponsors, educational institutions, philanthropic entities, etc.) and what you have accomplished together with emphasis on the past 3 years**

Our key partnerships include Texas Instruments, which has provided us with mentors, and the TBK Bank Makerspace, which has given us the opportunity to host annual summer camps and helped provide us with machinery that helps fabricate our robots. During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public faced a shortage of masks, and with the TBK Bank's support, we were able to manufacture 1,300 face shields that were shipped across the US.

**Describe your team's efforts in the past 3 years to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within your team, *FIRST*, and your communities.**

Our team has focused on encouraging girls in STEM and helping them find a love for something in a male dominated field. Some notable opportunities include the SWE Design Your World event and Presidents Day camps that we held. During these all day events we hosted girls from 15 cities across North Texas hoping to promote STEM and strengthen girls' interest in STEM as it typically decreases between middle and high school, making the number of girls involved significantly decrease as time goes on.

**Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will continue to run effectively for the foreseeable future**

The consistent number of returners have allowed us to remain sustainable. Our members have kickstarted many programs, such as after school camps, which have continued to grow into annual summer camps with a new partner, TBK Bank. Alumni's innovations also include starting one of the first SWE clubs in our school district. These small efforts made by previous members have allowed us to remain sustainable and have the opportunity to grow.

**Describe your team's innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and engage your sponsors within the past 3 years**

Our team's strategies to gain and retain sponsors is by being our authentic selves. Through our community involvement, such as the Homecoming Festival, and our presence at competitions, we have attracted sponsors such as TI where we have given business presentations. Similarly, by keeping in touch with our own personal connections, we not only engage with otherwise forgotten individuals, but also obtain sponsorships such as with American Airlines, Apple, and the Workshop by TBK Bank.

**Highlight one area in which your team needs to improve and describe the steps actively being taken to make those improvements.**

One area where our team needed to improve in today's fast-changing environment was to best utilize our time. We all have to adjust our schedule since Covid, and our team members were expected to take on greater responsibilities both in and out of school. That means coming to school on Saturdays or staying late on Tuesdays and Thursdays. These are the steps we've taken to make the best use of our time and resources so that we all can come together to accomplish our FRC goal.

**Describe your team's goals to fulfill the mission of *FIRST* and the progress you have made towards those goals.**

During one of our first meetings our mentor, Mr. Tolleson asked us collectively as a team what our goal should be for this FRC season. Immediately ideas such as hard work, ingenuity, winning state, even winning worlds arose from the team. However, we settled on one goal much simpler and less ambitious than these. We decided we wanted to become leaders, which we define as someone who's strong willed and committed to their work. This will allow us to prove how it's more than just robots.

**Briefly describe other matters of interest to the *FIRST* Judges, including items that may not fit into the above topics. The judges are interested in learning about aspects of your team that may be unique or particularly noteworthy.**

In the Beginning of 2021, the Robocats became involved in FIRST Access, becoming one of the first teams within the Dallas Independent School District to do so. This allows the students with disabilities in our school to have a way to

participate and compete in a compelling way. We were able to take 3 teams consisting of 6 students with 1 partner in each team down to San Antonio to compete in a small tournament during the Texas Cup.

## Essay

Reaching sustainability is something that the Robocats strive for. Given the 9 years that this team has been alive, every year we want to continue to grow and expand to the greater community. Although these efforts are a work in progress, it takes time to prove it's actually sustainable and working. The programs and partnerships we have today didn't start from nothing. It's been a long line of FIRST members working to always improve the current state of the team. In the early stages of the rookie team, it was hard getting off the ground and making a name for ourselves. In more recent years, we have planted a seed of opportunities for ourselves which has blossomed into the program we have today. Although this seems very sophisticated, and that the team is constantly cranking away, it's taken more than countless man hours to get to this current state.

In order to continue our growth, it's crucial to make the most out of every opportunity given. We have been able to grow from a couple of girls on our FRC team to an FTC team completely composed of girls. This team has not only been sustainable but also has continued to grow and flourish with a new generation of young women in STEM. Our all-girls team aims to provide a supportive environment for girls interested in STEM. From this small step of having an all girls robotics team, we had the chance to create a partnership with Studio Bella for Kids. It was a call to action as Studio Bella had an influx of requests to host Girl Scout camps. On President's Day 2019, our team hosted 80 Girl Scouts from 15+ cities across North Texas earning their robotics badges, sponsored by the Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas (GSNETX), and the event was so successful that GSNETX requested it to be an annual event. This branch of opportunities was only the beginning of what our team would accomplish. Given this new partnership, the Robocats and Studio Bella would continue to impact over 200+ students through various camps.

This type of growth had led the team to create our school district's first Society of Women Engineers club. The club had grown so much that it caught the attention of the Dallas chapter of SWE. Allowing us to be selected to host the 2019 Dallas SWE Chapter's Design Your World (DYW) event where we welcomed 120+ professional women engineers as volunteers and 100+ attendees from 20 cities across Texas along with many of their parents. As a result of this event, it became evident that the Robocats were a competent and compassionate group in the eyes of the community. Following this event, the Robocats decided to host an FTC Scrimmage for our sister teams and others that needed the practice. We hosted nearly 200 people, and caught the eye of FIRST in Texas. The small event that was organized casually would grant us one of the greatest opportunities our team has yet to encounter. We were selected to host an FTC Qualifier meet at Woodrow. Our team was able to host over 32 teams that day; we were able to provide them with any support needed throughout the day from supplying them parts to helping them code. The Robocats embodied gracious professionalism that day. This event helped our brand and reputation immensely, so much so that we were also chosen to host the 2020 UIL Texas State Championship. Our school would have impacted over 300 people across North Texas with another regional meet that year, unfortunately, due to the rapid uprising of COVID-19, the season was canceled. We didn't let COVID stop our efforts though, as we partnered with our sponsors to help our community amidst the pandemic. Working with TBK Bank, we began hosting STEM summer camps in 2019 where we invited elementary and middle schoolers from around North Texas. At first, our summer camps were underdeveloped, and our supplies were limited to LEGO Mindstorms kits. Furthermore we had very few kids initially join the camps, but over the years, as more kids have enrolled in our summer camps, we have obtained more funding, and developed more hands-on activities, such as 3D-printing and designing opportunities. The Robocats have found many sustainable methods of educating young children and inspiring them to follow their STEM dreams.