

Welcome,  
**FIRST**<sup>®</sup> AmeriCorps  
Program Members!

2023-2024



**FIRST**<sup>®</sup>  
LEGO  
LEAGUE

**FIRST**<sup>®</sup>  
TECH  
CHALLENGE

**FIRST**<sup>®</sup>  
ROBOTICS  
COMPETITION

# Welcome to our 2023-24 Sites!



New Sites and Members



# Get to Know our Members



What would you like to share about your background and experience with *FIRST*<sup>®</sup>, STEM, education, etc.? If you are a *FIRST* Alumni, please be sure to include that.

Why did you decide to join the *FIRST* AmeriCorps Program, and what are you most excited about for your service as a member?

Why does STEM education matter to you? Or what impact do you think *FIRST* can make in your area?

Please share something unique about you, a fun fact, or your hobbies and interests



# Athens, AL Site



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# Clark McClung (*He/Him*)

## *Athens, AL Site*

For the past eight years, I have been involved with *FIRST*, starting with *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) Challenge in middle school all the way through *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) in high school. While on the FRC, I took on other responsibilities and began coaching one Discover team, two Challenge teams, and one *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC) team.



During my senior year of high school, I thought my involvement with *FIRST* would end. Now through the AmeriCorps program, I can continue impacting myself, and my community.

STEAM Education is an important factor in my life, providing beneficial skills and the power to turn small towns into booming cities. Through *FIRST*, we brought 1,500 people to a town that hasn't seen that many since 1985.

I absolutely love all things related to nature! Some of my favorite outdoor hobbies are rock climbing, camping, and hiking. And ... I started working in education when I was fourteen!



# Compton, CA Site



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# Juan Acha (*He/Him*)

## *Compton, CA Site*

I am a *FIRST* alumni and joining the robotics club turned me into the person I am today. *FIRST* robotics is something that needs lots of effort and dedication and that helped me remain on top of my game. It also helped me understand that there is always room for improvement because there was always a way to improve the robot.



I am very excited to give back and help out the students through the *FIRST* AmeriCorps program.

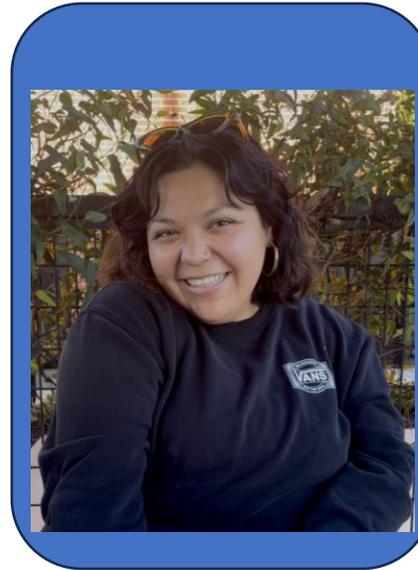
STEM education matters to me because it kept me distracted from everything and helped me stay focused in school.

I enjoy playing soccer and also enjoy playing the guitar.

# Alicia Elias (*She/Her*)

## *Compton, CA Site*

I am a Liberal Studies major with a minor in Arts. I volunteered in the STEAM Fest last academic year.



The *FIRST* STEAM Fest exposed me to robotics and LEGOs, and made me incredibly proud to have a program in the school district that I grew up in. I knew I wanted to be a part of that!

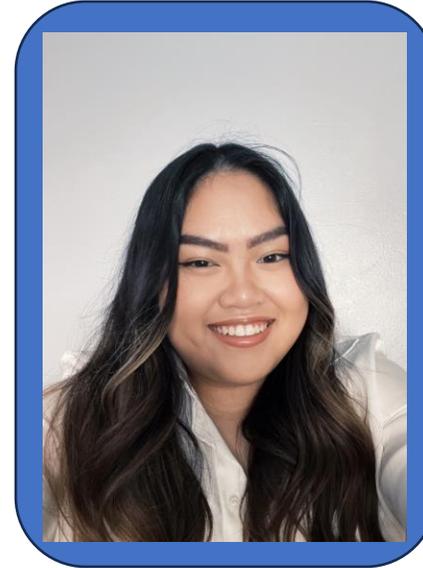
Being from Compton, it is amazing to see so many children thriving in this program; it will continue to change the trajectory for many generations to come, and hope that one day my own children can participate.

I enjoy photography, drawing, and painting.

# Amy La (*She/Her/Hers*)

## *Compton, CA Site*

My education experience has an emphasis in Student Affairs, and I've always loved working with students to find their path and figure out what their passions are.



I decided to join the *FIRST* AmeriCorps program following my volunteer experience as an Innovation Project judge with STEAMFest and the Robotics Festival within our Compton Unified School District.

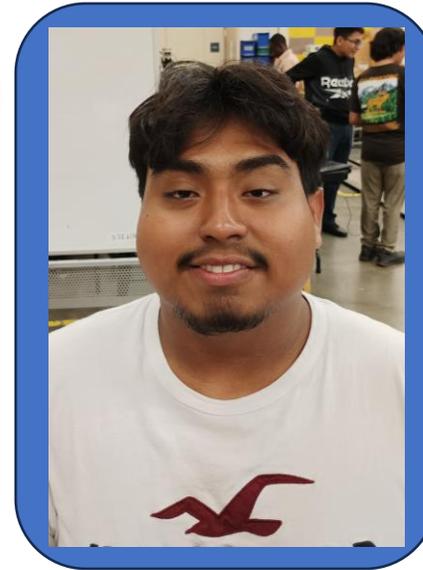
STEM education matters to me because our future holds a lot of opportunity for the different global issues that this world faces. I'm excited to work with students to take their projects from start to finish.

A fun fact about me is that I'm a dog mom of 3!

# Jeison Morales (*He/Him*)

## *Compton, CA Site*

I was fascinated with robots while in Roosevelt elementary school, and finally joined *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) and other STEM activities at Whaley Middle School. I continued to be in Robotics in Dominguez High School.



I decided to join the AmeriCorps program to continue working with robots, and to help a younger generation that are fascinated just like me.

STEM education matters to me because it is fundamental for not only engineering but also business. The impact that *FIRST* can make in my area is make sure they are able to reach their dreams and have a good future.

One of my hobbies is going to the gym; I also enjoy swimming. Something unique about me is that my eyes can blur and move fast.

# Connie Pocrass (She/Her)

## Compton, CA Site

This is my tenth year with *FIRST* as a lead mentor and coach, having started a *FIRST* LEGO League team when my kids were in elementary school, and graduated to and still competing in *FIRST* Tech Challenge today.



I'm big on team building so I think it would be exciting to watch kids become close friends with their teammates, bond like families, and grow and raise each other up.

STEM and *FIRST* is more than just robots, math and coding. It's important to teach kids that it's not all boring and can be fun. *FIRST* teaches critical thinking with a hands-on, team-based approach that is vital for their success.

I have worked for Disney Imagineering in the characters and animatronics division, and I have a background in pattern design and costuming. I am also an actor.

# Natalie Ramirez (She/Her)

## Compton, CA Site

This will be my first experience with *FIRST*, and I am excited to be working with the kids and schools. I have previously worked with young students and helped guide them through academic activities as well as achievements.



I am excited about seeing students develop an interest in STEM and gain confidence in their skills.

*FIRST* can make a good impact in my area, as it will get students to engage more in STEM education and provide skills/tools for their future interests.

A hobby of mine is doing yoga. I've been doing this activity since I was a child. Another fun fact is that I have two dogs and two cats.

# Julio Valenzuela *(He/Him/His)*

## *Compton, CA Site*

This past year was my first year with *FIRST* and my experience with *FIRST* has been nothing short of exhilarating ... watching all the students talk within themselves and create different scenarios to help them achieve their goals.



I am excited about returning to my *FIRST* AmeriCorps service, in the classrooms with students and coaches, collaborating to work on solutions for the robotic games.

STEM education matters to me as it is my path; in the future, many everyday tasks will revolve around specific STEM fields.

When I was in high school, I was on the varsity baseball team AND the robotics club, which many people found interesting, given the vast differences between the two.



# Hillsborough County, FL Site



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# Margery Singleton *(She/Her)*

## *Hillsborough County, FL Site*

This is my second year with the *FIRST* program. I am pleased once again to assist with implementing *FIRST* LEGO League at the classroom level to enable diverse groups of students to participate in Challenge activities throughout the school year.



I have always been interested in STEM and the program offered a way for me to be in the classroom helping students with hands-on learning activities.

STEM creates critical thinkers, increases science literacy, and enables the next generation of innovators. Exposing children to STEM develops early thinking and reasoning skills and supports their overall academic growth.

I like to write children's stories. My current interest is in fitness (boot camp, walking).



# Muscogee, GA Site



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# Dean Hammad *(They/He)*

## *Muscogee, GA Site*

I was introduced to *FIRST* through *FIRST* Robotics Competition (go team 5900!) and it turned an interest in technology into an unbreakable bond ... I am now set to graduate from Columbus State University with a degree in Robotics Engineering.



*FIRST* had come into my life during a rough time and reignited a sense of purpose within me. I want to be someone who makes an impact on the world and bring that experience to people who were just like me as a kid.

The principles of science exist all around us. In a world where people want to have rigid views, STEM education helps us want to seek answers and better understand the world.

I enjoy fursuiting, fishing and playing videogames. I also like to collect Pokemon plushies.



# New York City, NY Site



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# Nicholas Kuczek *(He/Him)*

## *New York City, NY Site*

I've been a part of the NYC *FIRST* community for all four of my high school years and entering college. I am a *FIRST* Alumni now, having done *FIRST* Tech Challenge for three years and *FIRST* Robotics Competition for four.



I am most excited to work with teams that come to the NYC *FIRST* STEM center and help them create their vision on what a robot should be, while giving back to the *FIRST* community.

I was heavily influenced at a young age to pursue STEM. A lot of people don't know about this field, and I would like to bring more light to the area of STEM education, as I am forever grateful being taught what I know today and being able to apply my knowledge to various things throughout my day.

I dabbled a little in small (3 lbs.) combat robotics and played piano for five years.

# Jonathan Morales *(He/Him)*

## *New York City, NY Site*

I am a *FIRST* Alum, starting with *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) Team 2877 as a sophomore. I moved to New York City and joined FRC 4571 for my junior and senior year, where I was captain. I have been mentoring for 6-7 years and am currently getting my Bachelors in Tech Education so I can teach *FIRST* in HS.



I want to help inspire our future generation of students, and am excited to see the growth of the students I help

STEM and *FIRST* changed my life; without it, I'm not sure where I would be. The implementation of *FIRST* programs can make a huge impact in my area to improve the quality of education.

During my free time I tend to spend all of it at the Cornell Tech NYC FIRST STEM Center.

# Ezz Moussa (*He/Him/His*)

## *New York City, NY Site*

I was born in Alexandria, Egypt, and arrived in the United States around six years ago. My passion for robotics persisted throughout my high school years while participating in *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) and *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC). After graduating, I transitioned into a mentoring role for my FRC team, as well as roles as a counselor, teacher, and manager at STEM camps. I also interned at NYC *FIRST*.



My long-term goal is to have a global impact, collaborating with FIRST teams to promote learning and growth. AmeriCorps is the stepping-stone towards realizing these ambitions, allowing me to turn my passion for robotics and mentoring into a meaningful and impactful journey.

Engaging in STEM education through teaching and mentoring has a dual impact. It imparts invaluable skills and fosters a strong sense of community. When aimed at underprivileged youth and girls, it becomes a catalyst for inclusivity and inspires STEM aspirations.

I'm a student at City College of New York, studying Computer Science and having a blast along the way! I'm also diving into some cool research -- if there's a connection between air quality and poverty in different parts of NYC.

# Sandy Rodriguez *(He/Him)*

## *New York City, NY Site*

My experience began with making little Arduino bots and progressed to being a member of a *FIRST* Tech Challenge and *FIRST* Robotics Competition team. Now, I am still involved with *FIRST*, coaching my high school team and assisting them in their success. *FIRST* taught me that the enjoyment of competition comes not only from winning but also from being a part of a community.



I chose to participate in the *FIRST* AmeriCorps Program because it allows me to reach out to youth in my community outside of high school students.

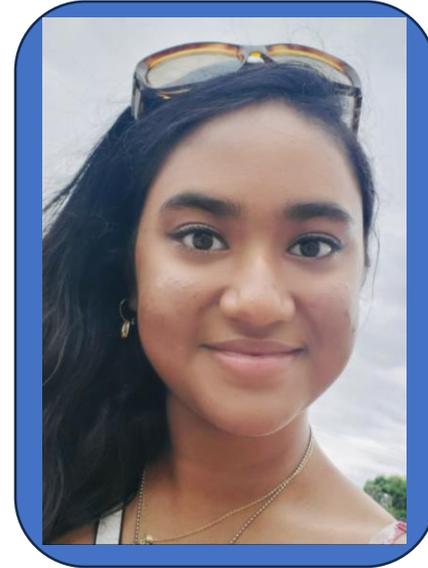
STEM education matters because it empowers the youth, instilling in them the belief that their innovations and ideas can shape the world. By harnessing this potential, we pave the way for a brighter, more progressive future.

A fun fact about me is that I have a twin sister. Most people say we look alike but I don't see it.

# Krista Singh (She/Her)

## New York City, NY Site

I am a Macaulay Honors freshman at The City College of New York majoring in Computer Science. I am a NYC *FIRST* alumna with experience as an Entrepreneurship Manager for *FIRST* Robotics Competition Team 4571, and now a *FIRST* Tech Challenge coach for Team 23513. My skills include merchandise development, web design, product design, accounting, and basic mechanical needs.



I want to be a part of the mission to close the gender gap that exists vividly within our STEM industry by encouraging females in schools across NYC to join and be a part of a bigger and more collaborative goal.

STEM education matters to me because most people associate STEM with careers in engineering, science, and teaching technology. Yet, some students across NYC experience additional pressures: being minorities, being a specific gender, and having familial expectations to live up to. *FIRST* impacts NYC by bringing awareness to these issues and allowing NYC to strive on a platform meant to be inclusive, no matter their situation.

I am a 7 year-trained Indian Classical Dancer in the genres of Bharatanatyam and Indian Folk, and have captained dance troupes in hip-hop, jazz, and ballet. I have also been doing Indian classical singing and harmonium playing for the past 8 years.



# Robeson County, NC Site



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# Megan Williams (She/Her)

## Robeson County, NC Site

I am a current *FIRST* Tech Challenge (FTC) coach and I have coached *FIRST* LEGO League Challenge for 8 seasons. I am also the North Carolina FTC Rookie Coordinator for several years. I love robotics and what *FIRST* stands for. I am honored to be working with Robeson County schools in NC.



I am enthusiastic and passionate about *FIRST*. Getting to share that passion with others is what I am most excited for during my time of service.

I have personally seen the impact that *FIRST* has had on students and it is nothing less than remarkable. Watching students learn and push themselves to new levels that they didn't think were achievable always makes me happy.

I build a lot! Wood projects, home improvement projects, and 3D printing, I like to see things come to life. (and I hate being bored so I stay busy)



# Volusia County, FL Site



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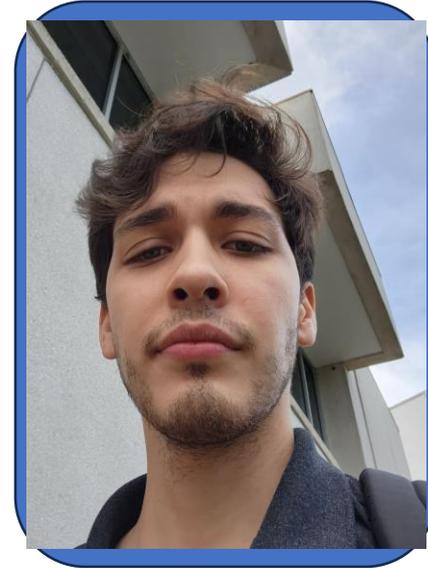
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# Ahmed Elfrgani *(He/Him)*

## *Volusia County, FL Site*

I have always loved all things science. I was in the robotics academy at Spruce Creek High School. I enjoyed my time there and have been able to use some of the skills learned there in my life.



AmeriCorps sounds like a fun way to help the next generation of engineers, thinkers, and makers. I wish I was inspired earlier on in my life to pursue STEM and now hope I can inspire others.

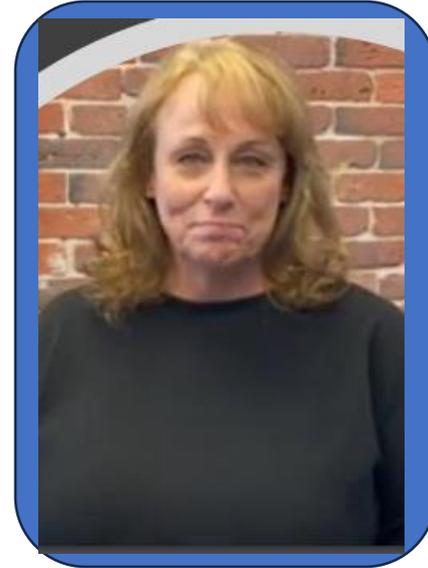
We need to help children see the potential STEM has not only for them but also society as a whole. There's always something that needs to be invented.

My family is from Libya, my parents brought me and my brother to Florida when I was just a baby. I'm thankful for this opportunity as I've gotten a great education and learned my strengths.

# Tori Kaspert *(She/Her)*

## *Volusia County, FL Site*

FIRST Alumni, Certificate in Recording Engineering, Certified USA Archery Coach.



I am very excited to participate in AmeriCorps this year now that I have a better understanding of what is expected of me. I really enjoy working with the kids.

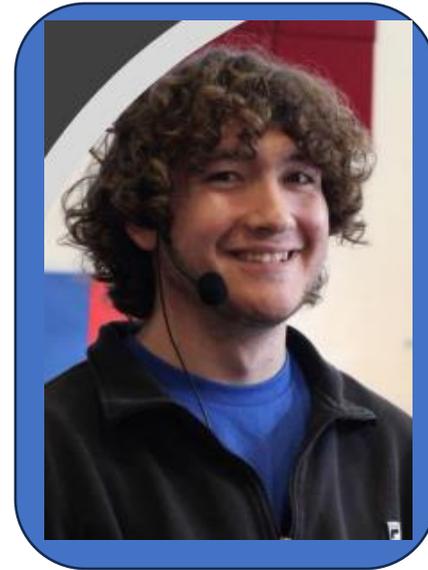
STEM education is the backbone of the future. It will give more opportunities to kids who may not be exposed to STEM

Former national ranked US Swimmer and US Archer.

# Connor Pagan (He/Him)

## Volusia County, FL Site

I was a member of the Academy of Information, Technology, and Robotics, whose foundation was in *FIRST* Robotics Competition. I was driven to pursue a career in engineering because of my time spent learning mechanical skills, CAD, and game design.



I joined the *FIRST* AmeriCorps program because *FIRST* was a healthy outlet of creativity and safe space for me. I want to be able to give other students the same opportunities I had, and help teachers with STEM education.

STEM is shaping young minds to be excited about robotics, and I have observed the positive impact *FIRST* has already made on my area.

I love rock climbing, jogging, and paintball

# Lamonte Smith *(He/Him)*

## *Volusia County, FL Site*

I only have a little background in STEM or *FIRST* besides using EV3's in middle school. I know block coding and am starting to pick up on the lighter technical things I've come across in the few weeks working as a *FIRST* AmeriCorps member.



I'm most excited to bring STEM to those who may not be able to experience it. I think there's no better mission than to enrich the youth. There is no change if you don't start them young. I'm excited to see what I'm doing has a lasting effect on the community.

STEM education fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It encourages curiosity and empowers individuals to explore the unknown, ask questions, and seek answers. These skills enable us to make informed decisions and adapt to an ever-changing world.

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I'm 6'5"



# Yuma, AZ Site



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# Lili Robles (She/Her)

## Yuma, AZ Site

My journey with *FIRST* started in 5th grade when I joined *FIRST* LEGO League (FLL) at my elementary school. In middle school, I mentored my former school in FLL Explore and Challenge. In high school I joined *FIRST* Tech Challenge and am now in my second year of college majoring in Biology, and volunteering with FLL.



I am excited to meet and inspire children in my area with similar backgrounds to me and show them that pursuing STEM is a possibility that they can achieve.

Many kids in my area are first generation children to immigrants, so higher education is a hard goal to obtain without help. *FIRST* is a good way to get kids interested and can help them make connections with schools, scholarships and aide.

I am very crafty with my hands, so I enjoy crocheting, weaving, and helping my father work on our cars.