

Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – January 2023

Equity – Treating everyone fairly, having equal opportunities and removing barriers

Diversity – The way we are all different

Inclusion – Creating space for everyone where differences are embraced

Project THRIVE Partnership with *FIRST* continues in 2023:

We (*FIRST*) have partnered with the Human Rights Campaign's Project THRIVE in order to reinforce our commitment to ED&I at *FIRST* and the importance of allyship to support LGBTQ+ colleagues, mentors, volunteers, and student participants, and to celebrate our differences.

Our commitment to embodying inclusion is to ensure that all members of the *FIRST* community feel a sense of belonging. Achieving this means our organization must be supportive and vocal about welcoming all people in the *FIRST* community and using our platform to raise awareness and highlight voices.

As a youth-serving organization, our commitment to inclusion is in service of helping all young people find belonging and thrive as part of our robotics teams and community. In June 2021, *FIRST* joined Project THRIVE, a multi-year, collaborative effort of many national organizations led by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation to create more equitable, inclusive support systems and communities for LGBTQ youth. Each supporting organization is committed to identifying opportunities within their own sphere of influence to increase awareness about and provide resources to address the unmet needs of LGBTQ youth and to highlight best practices and success stories from our respective fields. Project THRIVE will build the skills and capacities of all youth-serving professionals to better meet the needs of LGBTQ young people.

To enhance the contributions of underrepresented and underserved youth in STEM, we must invest in them at all stages of their development, including their access to *FIRST* programs and experiences on teams.

- [Project THRIVE Pride Message](#)
- [Learn More about Project THRIVE](#)
- [Learn More about the Human Rights Campaign](#)
- [Shop the FIRST Pride Collection](#)

From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! - Free STEM Activities – Part 2

Join us in celebrating science, technology, engineering, and math with free activities. This month we learn about:

- [Celebrating Women in STEM Today](#)
- [The History of Black Inventors](#)

December Events:

January 1 – Emancipation Proclamation: President Lincoln declared all individuals held in slavery free on this day in 1863

January 4 – Louis Braille’s birthday: he was a French educator who created a reading and writing system known as “braille” for the visually impaired

January 6 – Feast of the Epiphany: this Christian feast day celebrates the star leading the three wise men to baby Jesus closing the Christmas season

January 15 – Makar Sankranti: Hindu festival dedicated to the god of the sun, Surya

January 16 – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day: celebrates one of the best-known civil rights activists, MLK Jr.

January 22 – Lunar New Year: this festival marks the start of the new year in the lunar calendar used in East Asia, Southeast Asia and elsewhere

January 27 – International Day of Commemoration in Memory of Victims of the Holocaust: a United Nations holiday that remembers the approximately 6 million Jews murdered during World War II

January 29 – Birthday of Oprah Winfrey: the birthday of the “Queen of Media,” a well-known talk show host and philanthropist. She is also North America’s first Black billionaire

<https://www.diversityresources.com/diversity-calendar/>

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: Real Engineers - Career Case Studies:

Nicki Bonczyk- Mechanical Engineering



FIRST Alum Nicki Bonczyk fell in love with engineering after joining FIRST Robotics Competition team 107, R.O.B.O.T.I.C.S., from Holland, Michigan. After high school, she studied product design and manufacturing engineering and interned for JR Automation, eventually landing a full-time job there as a mechanical engineer – her dream job. “Not only did I already know tons of people there because so many employees volunteer at FIRST events, but I get paid to play with robots all day,” Nicki says. “Can you think of a better job?”

Learn more: <https://www.firstinspires.org/stories/first-inspires-engineers>

Youth Protection and Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training

Here are the links to the FIRST Inspires online training portal for YPP and ED&I. Here you will find great resources for student team members and adults alike:

- **Youth Protection Policy (YPP)** – (Please encourage ALL ADULTS who work with your team on a regular basis to go through the YPP screening process and be officially listed on your team roster.)
 - <https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/youth-protection-policy>
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**
 - <https://www.firstinspires.org/resource-library/training-equity-diversity-inclusion>

The FIRST NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

We are a team of coaches/mentors who want to help create a community and culture of people who embrace the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, who want to develop themselves, and who understand that growth and diversity of all types lead to team excellence.

Anisha Patel - The Pitt Pirates 2642
Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196

Linda Whipker (she/her) - Team PyroTech 3459
Melissa “Bee” Bube (they/she) - Girls on Fire 5679

All Editions are Available Online at: <https://www.firstnorthcarolina.org/belonging-newsletter>