

Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – May 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.

North Carolina's very own 2023 FIRST Championship, Milstein Division, Rookie All-star Award winners - FRC Team 9008 G-Force Robotics shares inspiration for outreach, personal growth and future goals - By Claire and Shelby



Recently, G-Force Robotics, an all-girl rookie team based in Clayton, N.C. won the NC State Championship Rookie All-star Award and then the Milstein Division, Rookie All-star Award at the 2023 *FIRST* Championship. The team, made up of 11 young women from public, charter, home and early college schools, came together to not only build robots, but to build community through inspiring more young women to pursue STEM. Here two of their members highlight what inspires this team to perform outreach, what they learn about themselves from the experience and what they have planned for the future.

Claire – Mechanical Team and Safety Captain

While strides have been made in recent years, still only a small percentage of U.S. engineers are women. Young girls do not receive a lot of exposure to engineering; this is something that G-Force Robotics is working to change. On Saturday,



Feb. 25, 2023, we celebrated National Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day by inviting local elementary and middle school girls to our build space. These girls learned some of the many engineering skills and principles that we use to build robots as a *FIRST* Robotics Competition team, by doing things such as working on batteries and helping take apart an old shooter mechanism. They also got to see our 2023 season robot in action and talk to the team about our design and thought process behind it. They also got to hear from and ask

questions to two female engineers and mentors for the team, Kendra (design engineer at Caterpillar) and Callie (process engineer at Novo Nordisk), about their experiences as women in STEM.

Most of the girls we hosted had never done anything like this before. They did not know what an Allen wrench or a hex collar was. It was such an incredible introduction to engineering for these girls, but it was also an amazing experience for every member on the team to see their growth by the end of the event. While they seemed hesitant at first, it was remarkable to see these elementary and middle school girls gain confidence in their abilities. The success of this event affirms the need for more outreach like this. If more girls could get hands on engineering experience, they will know that they have a place in the STEM world. All G-Force's outreach efforts have this goal in mind. Even if our Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day efforts empowered just one girl, it was all worth it.

Shelby – Mechanical/Drive Team and Marketing Team

We are excited to be hosting the first-ever Wings Over Wayne Air Show STEM Hangar! This event will take place at the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in Goldsboro on May 20-21, 2023. There will be close to 40 exhibitors from NASA, Caterpillar, NASCAR, Battlebots, and more! Multiple *FIRST* Robotics teams will be joining us to demonstrate their robots on this year's challenge field and show the wonderful world of STEM. In 2019, nearly 160,000 people attended this free, public air show. We anticipate large crowds for this event and even have a private event for about 3,000 students. We are hoping to encourage and inspire others to follow their dreams in STEM.

As a member of the marketing team, I have been creating graphics to promote the air show. I have designed monthly Instagram posts, WOW stamp cards, and a banner. I have also attended meetings on base for the planning of the event. Last September, Claire and I had the opportunity to scout the Joint Base Andrews Air Show in Maryland. We were on the lookout to see what types of booths people were attending, what activities were available, and what received the most attention. There were a lot of NASA exhibits, so we ended up contacting them afterward.



I am inspired to do outreach to give back and enhance our community. I love having the opportunity to empower other girls in STEM! Until this team showed me so many possibilities, I had no idea that something I do for another person could impact them so significantly. My involvement with the air show has also shown me the amount of work that is put into events like these. I am so grateful to have these opportunities to show others the true meaning of teamwork and highlight FIRST to such a big audience!

Do you have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they belong?

Send them to FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com or use this [GOOGLE FORM](#) and we'll include them in upcoming newsletters.

From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! - People Of STEAM

#PeopleofSTEAM is an ongoing blog series that highlights diverse voices in our community and the impacts they are making on the world of *FIRST*[®], the world of STEAM, and/or in their own backyard.

Forever a *FIRST*[®] student at heart, Dr. Melissa Smith is a longtime champion of getting more students involved in STEAM and *FIRST*. She began her own STEAM journey when she was a student herself in *FIRST*[®] LEGO[®] League and then *FIRST*[®] Robotics Competition. From there, she continued her education at the University of Central Florida where she received her B.S. in Psychology and then headed to George Mason University for her PhD in Human Factors & Applied Cognitive Psychology. She is currently a User Experience Research Manager for YouTube at Google. Melissa also generously volunteers her time with *FIRST* and serves on the *FIRST* Board of Directors (and is the first *FIRST* alum to do so).

Learn more about Melissa's inspiring STEAM career and experiences here: [People of STEAM - Melissa](#)

May Events:

May is [Mental Health Awareness Month](#), also known as Mental Health Month. Its aim is to raise awareness and educate the public about mental illnesses and reduce the stigma that surrounds mental illnesses.

May is also [Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month](#), [ALS Awareness Month](#), [National Arthritis Awareness Month](#), and [Tourette Syndrome Awareness Month](#)

May 1: Beltane is an ancient Celtic, Pagan, and Wiccan holiday celebrated about halfway between the spring equinox and summer solstice. The day is often used to celebrate love and romance.

May 3: Asian-American Women's Equal Pay Day, marking the fact that Asian-American women earn 90 cents for every dollar earned by white men.

May 4: National Day of Prayer is a day of observance in the United States when people are asked to "turn to God in prayer and meditation".

May 5: Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican holiday commemorating the Mexican Army's 1862 victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War (1861 - 1867).

May 8 to May 9: Lag BaOmer is a Jewish holiday marking the day of hillula of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

May 17: International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia is a global celebration of sexual orientation and gender diversities.

May 18: Ascension of Jesus or Ascension Day celebrates the ascension of Christ from Earth in the presence of God within most of the Christian faith.

May 19: Malcolm X Day is a holiday celebrated either on May 19th, Malcolm X's birthday, or the third Friday in May, to commemorate the Civil Rights leader.

May 21: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development is a day set aside by the United Nations as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the values of cultural diversity and to learn to live together in harmony.

May 23 (sundown) to May 24 (sundown): Declaration of the Báb celebrates the day of declaration of the Báb, the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh and founder of the Bahá'í faith.

May 25 (sundown) to May 27 (sundown): Shavuot is a Jewish holiday with double significance. It marks the wheat harvest in Israel and commemorates the anniversary of the day when the Jews received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

May 28: Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh commemorates the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í faith.

May 29: Memorial Day in the United States is a federal holiday established to honor military veterans.

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: TJ Evarts - A dreamer, an inventor, an entrepreneur.



And he's been at it since he was a young child. *FIRST*, he says, had more than a passing influence on his life—it has become a lifestyle that defines who he is today.

Involved with *FIRST* for more than half his life, TJ says the experience played a major role in shaping who he is today. From *FIRST*, he gained knowledge and a toolbox of real-world skills—such as teamwork, how to pitch a product or idea, how to solve problems, and public speaking—that gave him a big head start in his career. *FIRST* inspired TJ to want to help others and taught him he was never too young to make a difference. Read TJ's story here:

<https://www.firstinspires.org/stories>

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training: Student Recruitment Strategies Tip Sheet

This tip sheet is designed to provide helpful strategies for recruitment of all students for *FIRST*® teams.

- [Student Recruitment Strategies Tip Sheet](#)

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>