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IN THE FIELD



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"I get the chance to meet people I never would have been able to before"

By Guest Blogger

By Maya Irvine.

Maya is a freshman at Camden High School and was named a Youth Afterschool Ambassador in the fall for the 2017-2018 school year. Maya has attended Camden FIRST LASER Robotics program for the past six years. Her blog post highlights the science, mathematics, technology, and engineering (STEM) learning opportunities available through the FIRST program and the experiences she's had as a member of the team.



With more than 460,000 students involved, more than \$50 million in scholarship opportunities, and more than 120,000 volunteers worldwide, FIRST Robotics has a global impact on every individual involved.

Newcomers often ask, "Is FIRST Robotics like Battlebots?"

Short answer: nope! The FIRST program is exceedingly more than that. FIRST Robotics is a non-profit organization, with a mission to "inspire young people to be science and technology leaders." Most FIRST Robotics teams take place in an afterschool setting — along with the 250+ students involved in the LASER Robotics program.

I've been involved in the FIRST program for six years, from elementary to high school. It's my first year on the high school team, and I am already involved in writing the Engineering Notebook (which documents the evolution of our team's robot through daily entries), working with Safety (a group that protects and enforces the FIRST safety morals), and designing graphics.

FIRST robotics has evolved my interests. Before joining the program, my only outlook for the future was simple: I had no idea what I wanted to do. When FIRST came into my life, I realized that there are so many careers and opportunities for students just like me. What I enjoy most about FIRST is how diverse it is. When our team goes to compete, I get the chance to meet people I never would have been able to before, including teams from all over the world!

Participation in FIRST programs is shown to inspire young people to become leaders and innovators and pursue careers in STEM related fields. Students involved show greater interests in STEM, STEM careers, and 21st century skills. With science- and math-related careers reaching an all-time high demand, the need for people to fill these spots has hit its highest appeal rates.

Through the FIRST program, kids of all ages have the chance to be someone big. The only question is, what will the world look like with these new engineers and inventors unleashed?

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