

An Open Letter to *FIRST* Teams Around the World

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To our *FIRST* Family,

We have been moved beyond words these past few weeks by the work you are doing around the world to stay safe, keep connected, and to give back to the communities you call home. Every single day we are seeing amazing examples of *FIRST* students coming together virtually and living the values and ethos we all hold dear as part of this incredible community. We've known for a long time that *FIRST* is more than robots, but with each passing day it becomes even more clear that the skills and values you've learned through these programs have uniquely positioned you to innovate right now – and long into the future.

The examples are countless, but here are just a few:

- FTC Team 16656, the Thunderbots, are collecting donations for food banks in Sacramento, CA, and creating face shields and masks to distribute to homeless shelters and health care workers.
- Poway High School SWENext (Society for Women Engineers) club, which includes several *FIRST* students, has been focused on much-needed social and emotional connectedness across borders by connecting with multiple FLL teams in Paraguay.
- FRC Team 3284, Camdenton *FIRST* LASER, is using 3D printers to create face shields for the Mid-County Fire Protection District in Missouri.
- FTC Team 14172, Disco Duckbots, are practicing via Zoom and polishing their skills while planning for the future. They've also been comparing notes with Iowa State University engineering student and *FIRST* alum!
- FTC Team 8610, ToborTech, is printing protective shields for medical workers in Oregon.
- Unit108 of the Israeli Air Force, along with *FIRST* Israel (led by Israeli FRC teams 1690, 1577 & 2231), is developing an open-source, low-cost, medically tested ventilator device, made from off-the-shelf components, to answer the worldwide shortage.
- W.A.F.L.E.S – a robotics club in Ontario with programs for ages 6 through high school (FLL Jr., FLL 105/37641/45981/45982, and FRC 4476) – has launched the “Alone Together Force for Change Challenge” to inspire people to stay connected and take care of themselves and each other.

For these stories and more, check out *FIRST RISE* Rewind (https://www.firstchampionship.org/first-rise-rewind?__hstc=212927755.4accf86f8dcdb42979c4d2854724361d.1586474132395.1586474132395.1586474132395.1&__hssc=212927755.1.1586474132395&__h) Around the world the spirit of *FIRST* is soaring, thanks to all of you – demonstrating Gracious Professionalism, compassion and a commitment to community.

What can you do?

- The most important thing you can do is to stay safe and healthy, and to follow local health official guidance regarding social distancing. Taking care of yourselves and your families is the top priority right now, and if you are unable to participate in broader coronavirus response efforts that's more than okay. For financial, physical and mental health resources to support you during this time, visit [DoSomething.org](https://www.dosomething.org) (<https://www.dosomething.org/us/articles/-displaced-or-disrupted-students-coronavirus-guide>) and [Benefits.gov](https://www.benefits.gov/help/faq/Coronavirus-resources) (<https://www.benefits.gov/help/faq/Coronavirus-resources>).
- We encourage you to stay connected with each other virtually. Even if you don't have any major news to report, it's helpful to have someone to talk to and compare notes during these challenging times. So consider setting up a video call with members of your team or others you've met on your *FIRST* journey. And of course, tune into our Virtual Showcase (https://www.firstchampionship.org/?__hstc=212927755.4accf86f8dcdb42979c4d2854724361d.1586474132395.1586474132395.1586474132395.1&__hssc=212927755.1.1586474132395) on May 2 if you're itching for some QT with us at *FIRST*.
- Keep learning! Prioritize homework and lessons offered by your schools, of course, but also check out the incredible resources being offered by organizations like LEGO (<https://education.lego.com/en-us/lessons>) and MIT (<https://fullsteam.mit.edu/>) to keep the creative juices flowing in your down time. We're especially excited about the PTC Robots to the Rescue (<https://www.onshape.com/robots-to-the-rescue>) challenge exclusively for *FIRST* Tech Challenge and *FIRST* Robotics Competition students.
- Support your community in the ways that make the most sense given local needs. As you can see from the team examples above, regions are impacted by the coronavirus differently, and will need support in varying ways. Whether using 3D printers to produce face shields and masks, converting robots to help deliver food, or even staying home to help flatten the curve, we all have a role we can play. We encourage you to work with your coaches, mentors, parents and others in determining the needs of your community, and of course follow the guidance of your local health care providers and community leaders to ensure any contributions are meeting necessary standards and requirements.

- Share your stories with us and each other on social media using #FIRSTFFC. We can all be a force for change in our communities, and we want you to be able to highlight and share your inspiration with each other. Please help spread the word about how you're living the ethos of *FIRST* in your own way.

We were founded 31 years ago to inspire young people to become science and technology leaders and innovators, and that is precisely what thousands of *FIRST* students are doing every day in ways both large and small in the wake of this devastating and life-altering pandemic. For that, we are extremely proud, thankful, and inspired. For all that you have and will undoubtedly continue to do in the weeks, months and years ahead, know that we're in this together and remain committed to advancing the mission of *FIRST* for decades to come.

Sincerely,
The Team at *FIRST* HQ

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