

Chairman's Award - Team 1023

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2021 - Team 1023

Team Number

1023

Team Nickname

Bedford Express

Team Location

Temperance, Michigan - USA

Describe the impact of the *FIRST* program on team participants within the last 3 years. This can include but is not limited to percentages of those graduating high school, attending college, in STEM careers, and in *FIRST* programs as mentors/sponsors.

Our team members feel that they've benefitted from the impact of FIRST. When each student was asked, they felt the most vital impact was the opportunities they have been given. According to students, the most important opportunities received are internships and scholarships for college, to which they give credit to participating in FIRST. Our peers have also said the skills they've collected such as soft skills, business skills, engineering skills, and volunteering, are completely due to FIRST.

Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.

Bedford is a small rural community. While the community itself is not diverse, Bedford Express strives to bring diversity to our program. We believe in and implement the idea that anyone can do robotics. Being a part of a small community has helped us build strong relationships with our local businesses and sponsors. Because of this, we are able to ensure that financial ability does not inhibit anyone's participation.

Describe the team's methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the *FIRST* message in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative. How does your team measure results?

To promote FIRST, we hosted STEM nights at our local library. This garnered interest in many homeschooled students, who previously were not allowed in the K-8 program. We advocated to our school board to ensure they could participate. We also worked with a district FTC team to create STEM activities in their book, "All Gears Can Turn." We partnered with a local team and the Imagination Station to host a STEM weekend. We measure our impact with the growth of our program.

Please provide specific examples of how your team members act as role models within the *FIRST* community with emphasis on the past 3 years.

Bedford Express gives every team member the opportunity to be a role model. We mentor K-12 teams, teach classes locally as well as leading a strategy seminar at the 2019 Michigan State Championship. Our doors are always open to teams in need of assistance throughout the build season. During competition, we continue to support teams to ensure they can compete.

Describe your team's initiatives to Assist, Mentor, and/or Start other *FIRST* teams with emphasis on activities within the past 3 years.

Last season, we opened our center to 8 local FRC teams, to give them practice space. We invite these teams to our annual unveil event. In our district alone, we have a strong K-12 program with 29 teams. Additionally, we have started an 8th grade FRC team, which we support through mentoring and shared resources. We hold Chairman's Chats at district events to prepare teams for their presentation. Prior to the 2019 Championship, we built a cart for an Israeli team so they could compete.

Beyond starting teams, what initiatives have you done to help inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators? What results have you seen from your efforts in the past 3 years?

One of our more personal accomplishments is pushing for the addition of new STEM classes in both our junior and senior high schools. We also partnered with a local hockey team, the Walleyes, to create a commercial. We had planned to hold a STEM night at one of their canceled games. Another project that is important to us is the creation of our initiative, #ThisIsHowWeSTEAM. We used this hashtag during the pandemic to encourage families to showcase their STEM skills with virtual challenges.

Describe the partnerships you've created with other organizations (teams, sponsors, educational institutions, philanthropic entities, etc.) and what you have accomplished together with emphasis on the past 3 years

One of our biggest sponsors, ForestView Recreation, challenged us to build a bowling robot for a community fundraiser. Another major sponsor, Apple, has generously donated both their time and money, as one of our lead mentors works there. In 2019, Senator Dale Zorn invited us to walk in the Ida Lights Parade to showcase our team. We annually partner with the AFSP to volunteer at their Out of the Darkness Walk. We also hosted a STEM weekend with a Sylvania team, #7460, at the Imagination Station.

Describe your team's efforts in the past 3 years to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within your team, *FIRST*, and your communities.

Currently, we have three all-girl teams in our K-8 program. We have always focused on exposing girls to FIRST, but after experiencing a significant drop in 2019, we wanted to do even more. We try to attend an all-girls event each year, which helps our girls gain technical skills and hands-on experience. We invited a local Girl Scout troop to our center. Here, we helped them earn their robotics badge by participating in STEM challenges and showcasing their skills to each other.

Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will continue to run effectively for the foreseeable future

Last year, FiM asked us to form a team solely for 8th graders. This resulted in advanced technical skills and experience, and we plan on continuing it this year too. We also hold summer camps to inspire kids to join FIRST. We want to remain active in our community and spread the message of the FIRST program. After our previous coach retired, we completely redesigned our leadership structure, making it more linear. This important change ensures a smooth transition after the seniors graduate.

Describe your team's innovative strategies to recruit, retain, and engage your sponsors within the past 3 years

We believe that our partnerships are important, so each year, we invite our sponsors and government officials to our unveil event in February. At the event, we highlight our accomplishments throughout the season, reveal our robot, and showcase other local FRC teams. We partner with the Bedford Alumni Association to run a booth at the Bedford Trade Fair. Here we promote FIRST and our team to the community. We advertise our major sponsors on our team shirts, our robot, and throughout our center.

Highlight one area in which your team needs to improve and describe the steps actively being taken to make those improvements.

As our team started to grow, we wanted to expand our reach past our local area. We started by reaching out to Ohio senators, discussing potential grants for teams. We also donated over 250 t-shirts to a home for children in need in Mexico. Additionally, we hosted a virtual Chairman's exchange over the pandemic that reached teams from four states. We want to keep teams involved during these unique times. Our goal is to continue with this and eventually connect with teams from all 50 states.

Describe your team's goals to fulfill the mission of *FIRST* and the progress you have made towards those goals.

1023 wants to ensure its continuation, so we hold training classes to pass knowledge down. Additionally, we have student mentors in each level of FIRST to prepare the younger kids for their future. These efforts create leaders and guarantee a smooth transition after seniors graduate. We also value creativity and innovation. Every part of our team is student-led, including strategy, mechanical, and outreach. These opportunities give our students confidence and leadership skills to take with them.

Briefly describe other matters of interest to the *FIRST* Judges, including items that may not fit into the above topics. The judges are interested in learning about aspects of your team that may be unique or particularly noteworthy.

On team 1023, our mission is to impact each student and ensure that they are given the opportunity to grow and expand

their knowledge of STEM. Not only do we involve our students, but we strive to bring all aspects of our community, and others, together. Whether it's hosting a STEM night or creating a robot that can bowl, we spread the messages and values of FIRST in everything that we do. Our greatest strength as a team is finding ways for all to express themselves in our program and community.

Essay

Team 1023, Bedford Express, has been a part of FIRST since 2003. We are proud of the legacy that we joined and will leave for future generations. FIRST goes beyond the playing field to provide life experiences for everyone involved. Bedford Express gives us the opportunity to be volunteers, advocates, promoters, leaders, to inspire others, and to be role models.

We can be VOLUNTEERS. BX continually supports our community through projects such as Adopt-A-Road, visiting local nursing homes, working with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, assisting at the local trade fair, running a booth at our school's trunk-or-treat, helping at firehouse breakfasts, and building a cart for an Israeli team. Recently, we took the initiative to do even more for the community, including volunteering at mobile food drives, sending T-shirts to Mexico, building beds with a local church, and 3D printing PPE during the pandemic. We know and appreciate how much our community does for us, and it is important for us to give back.

We can be ADVOCATES. We recognize the value of FIRST and advocate for our team's continued growth to local businesses. Partnerships with our sponsors have earned us lasting support & respect in our community, in addition to donations, amazing mentors & even internships. We have learned that being an advocate requires us to stay present and available with not only our sponsors but our community and local government as well. We started the initiative of creating a grant system in Ohio, similar to the rookie grant system in Michigan. We had the opportunity to meet with Senator Teresa Fedor at our center. She was impressed with our K-12 program and eager to spread FIRST throughout Ohio. We put her in touch with the Sylvania STEM Center to continue these efforts. In 2018, we faced the threat of losing our practice center, which houses our K-12 program. We attended every school board meeting and spoke on the impact of keeping the program together. We gained the support needed from the school board and the community to keep our center. In 2019, we came to our school board to advocate for homeschooled kids to be able to join the district FIRST program. We also pushed for STEM classes that were added in our junior and senior high schools. We are thankful that we can be a part of our school and community's growth.

We can be PROMOTERS. Bedford Express prioritizes spreading the message of FIRST and STEAM. In 2019, Senator Dale Zorn invited us to create a float for the Ida Parade, where we showcased our program to over 38,000 people. We also want to incorporate our sponsors in our community events. In 2019, one of our biggest sponsors, Forestview Recreation, challenged us to build a robot that could bowl. We turned this into an event that promoted our team and the bowling alley. Over the past two years, we have partnered with the Toledo Mudhens, the Walleye, and the Imagination Station in an effort to spread awareness of FIRST beyond our community. The Walleye came to our center to film a commercial that highlighted our entire K-12 program. We took this opportunity to showcase our hashtag, #ThisIsHowWeSTEAM, to promote and expand FIRST virtually. Closer to home, our school held a winter pep rally where we were able to show off our robot and promote our K-12 program.

We can be LEADERS. Bedford Express recognizes how important future generations are, so each year we ensure support for our K-8 program through avid mentoring and coaching. Currently, two of our students are coaches for K-3 teams. Annually, we host an FTC event and an FLL Jr. Expo. At both events, team members take on key roles, such as Event Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator, Pit Admin, and Announcer. This year, we are still hosting the FTC event on the week of March 21st, but they will be completely virtual. We are also a Hub, meaning teams can use our field to record and practice their runs they will submit for the event. We also host the FTC Kickoff event, where we reveal the challenge and host games for the teams. With this year being virtual, we split the teams into breakout rooms and hosted presentations for different aspects of the team. Students run classes and games for the teams. Since 2015, we have implemented Robot Rally, a program for underclassmen to learn the basics of robotics and share these skills with other teams. We continue to support teams and take initiative to ensure every team has the opportunity to be successful. We are committed to supporting other FRC teams throughout the entire season. We extended an invitation to teams in Michigan to use our center & resources. In recent years, teams from Ida, Blissfield, Monroe, & Bedford have taken advantage of this opportunity & join us in our center for the build season. In addition, we've invited many teams to attend our kick-off & unveil, such as Sylvania, Whiteford & Blissfield. Blissfield is a rookie team, so we are putting them On Track for success through mentoring & sharing resources. On 1023, we know that support stretches far beyond robots and mechanical skills. In 2019, we hosted a strategy seminar at the Michigan State Championship. We also hosted a Chairman's Chat at our district events for the last two years. We invited any team who was doing Chairman's, or interested in doing Chairman's, to discuss different strategies or questions they may have had throughout the season. When the 2020 season came to an abrupt stop, we looked for ways to continue supporting teams virtually. Through social media, we connected with a team that annually hosts a nationwide virtual Chairman's Exchange. With so many teams looking for virtual options, they were hoping to find teams willing to host their own event. Bedford Express gladly took on this role. Through networking, we were able to reach 13 teams from 3 different states. As hosts, we worked with teams and guest judges to create an opportunity for teams to present, receive feedback, and ask questions.

We can INSPIRE. Previously, we have hosted summer camps through our district's community education program. In 2019, we expanded to include kids who aren't already involved with FIRST. We hosted STEAM nights at our local library for 6 weeks, where we read interactive children's stories and created STEAM challenges to go with them. We also worked with a district FTC team, the Turning Gears, to create an activity that we published in their book, All Gears Can Turn. On the final night, we read their book, did the STEAM activity, and brought in both of our robots, demonstrating them and allowing the kids to drive. These events inspired homeschooled children to join robotics. Going beyond our local community, we partnered with the Imagination Station to host a STEAM weekend, where we created and ran STEAM activities. We also showcased our robots and allowed guests to interact with them. We wanted to continue with these events while partnering with the Toledo Walleye. In March 2020, we were scheduled to host a STEAM event with games and live demonstrations. Unfortunately, after we had arrived and set up, this event was canceled due to a last-minute COVID ordinance. Though we were disappointed, we still wanted to get our community involved with FIRST and STEAM virtually. For 6 weeks, we created virtual STEAM challenges that went with read-aloud stories. These activities were posted on our website and shared through social media, reaching families all the way in Germany. To further extend past our borders, we have hosted 4 exchange students on our team. Here, they experience an entire competition season and can take what they learned back home. Our high school team created the goal to recruit & inspire girls to join the program. This year, 8 out of the 44 team members between 1023 and the 8th-grade team are female. To date, each level of FIRST at Bedford has at least one all-female team. We hosted an event for local Girl Scout Troop 77299 to help them earn their robotics badge. Not only do we stress the importance of females in STEAM in the younger levels of FIRST, but we also implement it through our own team, by regularly attending an all-girls competition. This year, we are also partnering with our all-girls FTC team, FLAG, to work on the virtual challenges.

We can be ROLE MODELS. At our 2020 district Chairman's Chat, we were surprised when Panther Powered, a younger team, explained our impact on their team. Being told that we were their role models was both inspiring and motivating. We continued working with them after the event and even through the end of the season. Additionally, many of the teams that we have assisted through Robot Rally have gone on to form their own programs similar to ours. We recognize the value of our idea and love seeing other teams succeed. In 2019, FiM asked us to form an 8th-grade team. We took this opportunity to teach them the basics of FRC and prepare them for the high school team. We are continuing with this team for the 2021 season. Over the past three years, we have worked to build a successful CAD team. This year, we were able to purchase a 3D printer for our FTC teams. Our CAD team is currently working with those five teams to teach them SolidWorks and better prepare them for FRC. In December, RoboZone, a FiM broadcasting network, invited us to do an interview with them. We were honored to be selected in the top 20 FRC teams in Michigan. On Bedford Express, we are fortunate to have many students come back as mentors after graduation. The dedication that is demonstrated by our mentors and leaders sets an example for the role models we strive to be.

Bedford Express gives every team member a complete FIRST experience. No matter how long a student is on our team, because of FIRST, we ensure that they leave as Volunteers, Advocates, Promoters, Leaders, Role Models, and an Inspiration to be a force for change.