

FIRST Impact Award - Team 28

2023 - Team 28
Team Number
28
Team Nickname
Pierson Whalers
Team Location
Sag Harbor, NY - USA
Describe the impact of the <i>FIRST</i> 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 <i>FIRST</i> programs as mentors/sponsors.
First has impacted our graduates over the past 28 years. Recently, many graduates have come back to assist the team during the build season. We love the insight they bring and their coding and building skills. Our team continues to encourage students to pursue science and technology. 66% of last year's graduates are studying engineering. In addition, 50% of our seniors plan on going to universities for engineering or computer science; including MIT, WPI, RPI and Embry Riddle.
Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.
We are located in Sag Harbor, a small boating town on the East end of Long Island. This has presented us with both challenges and opportunities. Finding mentors with an engineering background has been a challenge. This year we have been lucky to have a coding mentor, with a summer house in Sag Harbor and a Zebra engineer who also lives locally. Being in a close-knit community has provided us with a great deal of encouragement and support from a diverse group of local people and businesses.
Describe the team's methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the <i>FIRST</i> message in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative. How does your team measure results?
We demonstrate at the elementary school and the middle/high school Spirit Night demos. We ran three days of workshops at Camp Good Grief. We shared informational pamphlets and food with the community at a Cardboard Boat Race. To promote sustainability, we created a shared drive, with resources, designs, code and information from past seasons. Our leadership structure is defined with clear roles and responsibilities. This includes training to make sure their skills and knowledge are passed on.
Please provide specific examples of how your team members act as role models within the <i>FIRST</i> community with emphasis on the past 3 years.
Recently, Team 28 has worked as role models for young people while running workshops at Camp Good Grief. Several of our junior and senior members work as tutors for underclassmen who struggle in their

core classes, helping them organize and achieve academically. We also work with several middle school students to teach them the values of FIRST as well as working on robot and code development. This allows us to train future members and leaders of Team 28 in an effective and inspiring manner.

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

Last year we received the robots shipped from Brazil for Team 7566 and Team 7567 and helped transport them to the competition. We had zoom meetings and developed a relationship with these teams at SBPLI. This year, Southampton High School was interested in creating a team but did not feel they had the knowledge or structure to start one. We approached the superintendents who now allow their students to join our program with the long term goal of having Southampton build their own FIRST team.

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?

Last summer, Team 28 worked with children at Camp Good Grief, a place for grieving children to get support. We created fun and interactive engineering inspired crafts with small batteries and wires. The children expressed great interest in inquiring about robotics teams at their own schools. Most said they would love to join an existing team or create one in their community. They were fascinated by the concepts of FIRST and the team hopes that they pursue this interest in robotics further.

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

We have formed a strong relationship with Southampton school, as a result of its students joining Team 28. We have become close with Brazil's teams 7566 & 7567 as we assisted them in transporting their robot to competition. The most rewarding partnerships have been with local sponsors, leading to larger monetary sponsorships. In 2022, they partnered with the Hass Foundation and received a \$6000 grant. We also established a connection to Friends of Tonga after the tsunami hit their country.

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

We are focused on promoting diversity and inclusivity by increasing participants of underrepresented groups and supporting others through this. We hang an inclusivity flag in our pit and give away pronoun pins at competitions. Our annual Potluck dinner will now celebrate the multicultural diversity of our team with families sharing a dish from their culture. Our video will feature several languages of our team members. Our team also did a salsa class as part of our team building activities.

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

In order to ensure Team 28 will run effectively in the future, we have created multiple committees within the team to train younger members for leadership positions and keep them accountable for their goals. With this, the team has become more organized and efficient. Each committee has a head who delegates accordingly. Additionally, we have created a detailed business plan to keep monetary concerns more organized. This further allows us to see the achievements and goals on paper.

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

Team 28 creates close relationships with our sponsors. We have over 25 local sponsors at various donor levels. We send out periodic newsletters touting our recent accomplishments as well as spotlighting members, allowing sponsors to see exactly where their money is going. We did video shout outs to each sponsor, which was also fun to make. We participate in community events, such as Spirit Night, the Cardboard Boat Race and hopefully the upcoming Harborfest, where we can promote our sponsors.

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

Team 28 has placed focus on improving the organization of our robotics work space. In the beginning of the year we use meeting time to organize our room and build materials. This allows the team to make sure we have everything we will need for the upcoming FIRST competition season as well as having new members familiar with the room and parts. We also need more mentors. We have reached out to Zebra and other engineers to try to find people in our area or who can connect remotely.

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

One of Team 28's initiatives is to spread FIRST ideals to younger generations. To meet these goals, they mentor middle school students, inviting them to shadow their team and learn more about FIRST's opportunities at a young age. This has increased their team participation as students enter high school. Team 28 worked with children at Camp Good Grief to motivate interest in STEAM with engineering activities. The children expressed great interest in joining a robotics team in their own school.

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.

Team 28 has worked exceedingly hard in recent years to find and maintain sponsors. We have seen great improvement compared to past years. The team has found that hand delivered letters, monthly newsletters and social media exposure are small gestures that mean a lot to our donors. As our team has grown we have also seen a need for team building activities. This creates a fun atmosphere and builds bonds. We have done Salsa dancing, relay races, human knots and summer activities.

Essay

Team 28 is an eclectic and hardworking team that contributes to our community in a variety of ways. Our team is based in the small town of Sag Harbor, located on the East end of Long Island, New York. In

recent years, we have had a multitude of goals and focuses that we have proudly achieved. These include, but are not limited to, promoting diversity and participation on our team, engaging in more community events, giving back to those in need, and increasing sponsorship. Aside from these missions, we have been successful in the traditional robotics aspect of recent FIRST Competitions. For instance, in 2022 Team 28 made it to the SBPLI quarter-finals. This year and in future years, we plan to go above and beyond in all aspects of FIRST goals. Team 28 places a focus on the organization and structure of our team. We do this with the overall goal of making the team more effective and connected. We have constructed coding, engineering, business, and safety committees. Each with a head, who delegates accordingly. With this, every member always has a job and someone to go to when in need of assistance. Currently, the team has 45 members and 6 mentors. Additionally, Team 28 places a strong value on the promotion of diversity and inclusivity on the team. We have taken initiative in this by increasing participants of underrepresented groups on our team. Furthermore, we are using our annual potluck dinner as a means of celebrating the multicultural diversity of our team; each family is encouraged to share a dish from their native culture. In our FIRST Impact Award video, we chose to feature several languages spoken by our team members to highlight our diversity. To share such ideals within the broader FIRST community, we will be hanging an inclusivity flag in our pit and giving away pronoun pins at the competitions. This will ensure that members of other FIRST teams feel safe and included with all Team 28 members. Throughout the past 3 years, we have had triumphs regarding the promotion of our team. By using TV monitors in the hallways of our school, we were able to reach a wide audience of potential recruits. Returning members also recommend our team to friends and other classmates. Recently, we have shown off our robot at our Spirit Night to encourage further recruitment. We promote the business and social media aspects of our team in order to attract students who may be intimidated by the concepts of coding and mechanics. We created an agreement with a neighboring school district to allow students to join Team 28. As a result, our team membership has nearly doubled in comparison to previous years. Team 28 also encourages increased parent participation by inviting them to meetings and other events. This not only strengthens the relationships between parents and children but leads to potential mentorship opportunities. In August of 2023, Team 28 made an immense effort to spread knowledge of STEAM by working with a local summer camp. Camp Good Grief is a camp based on Long Island, New York specifically for grieving children. Each member of the camp was a child under 13 who recently lost someone close to them. Members of the team prepared small engineering crafts for children aged 7 to 12. We used cardboard, wire, plastic wheels/propellers, straws, and batteries to make mini bugs, cars, and boats with the campers. We were able to introduce the ideas of FIRST and STEAM to the children. There was a completely positive response from all of the children we worked with. Many of them expressed interest in joining a robotics team at their school, and even creating one. Working with grieving children was truly a heartwarming experience. In addition to Camp Good Grief, members of Team 28 participated in a local cardboard boat race. We constructed 2 full-size boats out of only cardboard and duct tape. At the mock regatta, 5 team members raced their boats down a portion of the Peconic River in Riverhead, New York. Not only did this allow us to unleash our creativity, but also supported the bonding of our team members. Construction of the boats took days of dedication and problem-solving but was overly rewarding. It was an extremely challenging task to make a ship that would support people and float but the relief and joy that members felt after completing the race was indescribable. Another key component of the race was communication. Rowers of the boats had to continually talk to one another throughout the race in order to move in the right direction and remain afloat. The cardboard boat race also allowed our team to increase community outreach. We set up our own tent and barbequed at the event. Thus, we not only advertised participation in STEAM organizations but made relationships with other groups and strengthened those within our team. Team 28 has not only increased their community outreach, but also the number of sponsors and the total amount received from

them. For us, it is crucial to maintain close relationships with current sponsors and potential donors. Residing on the East end of Long Island, we are isolated from large corporate sponsors that most other teams have access to. While some may see this as a hindrance, we have embraced the idea of creating a close-knit community with local businesses. In 2022, we had over a 30% increase in monetary donations compared to previous years. This included an incredible \$6,000 grant from the Gene Haas Foundation, and an additional \$2500 this year. This was an honor and helped our team immensely. In 2023, we have already exceeded our goal of raising \$15,000 by 47%, bringing our donations to over \$22,000. To maintain sponsors, we aim to create strong relationships with our sponsors. We send out monthly newsletters to show them precisely what their money goes to and the positive effects it has on the team. Additionally, we encourage sponsors to visit us at our workspace to learn more about the team and FIRST. By doing this, Team 28 hopes to express that we are beyond thankful for the support of all magnitudes. Team 28 has built countless partnerships with not only our sponsors but various regional and global organizations. In 2023, Team 28 invites students from a neighboring town, Southampton, to experience the opportunities of FIRST. Unfortunately, the Southampton school district does not currently have the proper resources for its own team. The participation of these students has inspired Southampton High School to attempt to create a FIRST team of its own. We hope to provide assistance and mentor the creation of this team. Southampton students have contributed to Team 28 in incredible ways. We are overly pleased by the efforts and passion these students have shown, in response to the welcoming attitudes of our team members. Team 28 has also collaborated with other FIRST teams on Long Island. Northport Robotics, Team 5099, and Team 28 have joined together to solve the mysteries and overcome the challenges of the Swerve Drive system. Furthermore, the Regal Eagles, Team 2869, has graciously invited us to their very own Regal Eagle Rampage. This opportunity allows us to come together with other local teams, and collaborate on ideas. With this, Team 28 is able to share our personal strengths along with learning from those of others. Finally, Team 28 has partnered with Zebra technologies. One of their engineers has generously offered to mentor our team for the 2023 season. His insight has already proven to be extremely beneficial to the strategy and overall success of Team 28. On a more global scale, Team 28 has worked with robotics teams and other organizations to spread the compassionate ideals of FIRST Robotics. Primarily, in early 2022 the island of Tonga was devastated by a volcanic eruption and tsunami. Team 28 has a strong emotional connection to the island since our main mentor lived there for many years. Hearing the devastating news caused the team to fundraise and donate five hundred dollars to organizations that aid in the rebuilding of Tonga. In addition, Team 28 has formed partnerships with FIRST Robotics teams globally. In 2022, we were contacted by Team 7566 and Team 7567 from Brazil. Both teams planned to attend the SBPLI Hofstra competition but had no way of transporting their robot from the shipment location to the competition. To solve this issue, we offered for both teams to ship their robot to our school. We then used extra space in our transportation vehicles to haul their robots to the competition. Team 7566 and Team 7567 were overly thankful for this generous act. At the competition, we continued to work together by sharing strategies and helping each other mechanically. We plan to reach out to both teams again in the 2023 season to continue this relationship. Overall, Team 28 has not only partnered with organizations on a local level but also globally. In closing, Team 28 is a diligent, open-minded, and persevering team that works together to achieve our goals and make all members feel included. We hope to carry out similar and more ambitious tasks in years to come. Such tasks will be inspired by the ideas of promoting diversity and participation on our team, participating in more community events, global engagement, giving back to those in need, and increasing sponsorship. In this, we hope to continue to spread the positive messages of FIRST Robotics. Another crucial intention of Team 28 is to increase STEAM participation and get more young people interested in the field. As a whole, Team 28 members and mentors recognize that there is a growing demand for STEAM careers, therefore what we learn today will be a large part of our futures. Team 28 treasures the

relationships that they have made in recent years and are thrilled to be a part of an organization as inspiring, encouraging, and welcoming as FIRST Robotics. ;

