

***FIRST* Impact Award - Team 8054**

2024 - Team 8054
Team Number
8054
Team Nickname
FLARE
Team Location
Kadıköy, 34 - Türkiye
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.
FLARE is a holistic learning environment that enables us to find ourselves, share, and cultivate our self-confidence. All of our alumni have attended college in several countries and STEAM-related fields. Currently, 100% of our team members plan to pursue a major in STEAM or Business, attributing their decision to pursue these degrees to the inspiration they gained from the FIRST programs. Numerous FLARE members and alumni volunteer at FRC, FTC, and FLL. One of our alumni is our lead mentor.
Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.
8054: Diverse personalities, shared dreams. We cooperate with organizations such as Çorbada Tuzun Olsun, Parıltı, Let's Do It, FORD Otosan. Our projects like Girls Who Code training, Wish Tree and Görünmez Bağlar for disadvantaged students and Make It Braille for the visually impaired reflect our commitment to turn dreams and needs into impactful realities. We embrace the notion that small actions carry significant ideas, and even crumbs can become world-changing events through determination.
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?
Embracing the belief “As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined”, we created an educational storybook series. Our book “Kalbini Bulan Robot” leveled down the age of meeting FIRST to kindergarten and evaluated by 120 6-year-olds ideas, is available for free download on Google Play Books and our website, complete with vocalization for visually impaired children. Together with effective use of social media we value every individual, track and listen not only for numbers but the lives we changed.
Please provide specific examples of how your team members act as role models within the FIRST community with emphasis on the past 3 years.
Our members believe in contributing FIRST and our society. Our mentors and alumni volunteer as FTC and FRC volunteers, with 6 members in FTC and FLL. Beyond that, 25 of our team members are the first and only regular ÇOTUN volunteers from FIRST, inspiring 7 other FRC teams to volunteer like them and

with them. We support and care for the teams in need within the fields of software, mechanics, and awards by hosting or regularly visiting teams. Our 2 members are field executives at Let's Do It.

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

With the FLARE Robot Academy program, we provide comprehensive support for various robotic teams, including FLL, FTC, FRC, VEX, and Blender. We have meticulously prepared guiding maps and documents for every aspect of their journey, covering from registration to workshop setup, material procurement to sponsor acquisition. With the program, we founded the 5th FRC team in the NETHERLANDS and opened a VEX team in Turkey. We also revived one FRC and another FLL team, overcoming previous challenges.

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?

We have been organizing STEAM Weeks since 2019, introducing FIRST, FRC, technology, and science with a total of 4800 primary, secondary and high school students. Over the years, many of the secondary school students we introduced FIRST, have become a member of us. Through the Blender courses we provided, reached out to 200 secondary schoolers, and our tailoring book "Kalbini Bulan Robot" encouraged hundreds of 6-year-olds to have an early curiosity and eagerness about science and technology.

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 partnered with FORD to enhance our 3-year-old Girls Who Code project and to provide braille bricks to visually impaired children at Parıltı Association. We volunteered for our homeless citizens at ÇOTUN, cooking for 19 days, 114 hours, and a total of 2850 bowls. Representing ÇOTUN at FIRST, we established the only volunteer network among teams, inspiring 7 FRC teams to follow our path to ÇOTUN. We became Let's Do It Field executives, cleaning 8.479.000m² of forest area and 6km of eco-road.

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

We believe in the "equality of opportunity". Individuals must have the same opportunities and the deserved ones must be glorified. This ideology has expanded our team by 40% girls over the years. Our 3-year-old project Girls Who Code is a 6-hour-long, individual, tailored coding course for girls, prepared to break the biases of women in technology, reaching out to 23 girls all around Istanbul. We reach out to the visually impaired, the ones in need to raise the fact "FIRST for Everyone".

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

Practice is the best teacher. We empower each team member by giving them responsibilities in task units they're interested in, like social media, mechanics, and FIRST values, allowing them to make mistakes and learn from them. Our 4 sub-team leaders conduct weekly planned meetings and liaise with task

leaders. With the STEAM Weeks project, our rookie members join us already familiar with FRC and our team, enabling them to singlehandedly conduct projects and veterans; earlier than anyone else.

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

Our finance team is well-connected on professional platforms like LinkedIn, identifying and engaging with potential companies. We prioritize organizing face-to-face meetings for active communication and present specially crafted materials with sponsorship documents to secure optimal cooperation. Furthermore, we maintain continuous communication through partnership projects, meetings, and bulletin news to familiarize them with FIRST and foster a sense of belonging to the FRC community.

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

As the years passed, we noticed that some of our veteran and rookie members tended to get bored out, leading to a decline in interest and prioritization of FIRST programs. To minimize this issue and foster a more social environment, we started placing greater emphasis on multi-team, multi-association, and cross-task unit involved projects. We formed mixed volunteer groups, collaborating with teams 7576 and 9160 for ÇOTUN, and invited non-team-related friends to competitions and study sessions.

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

FIRST is confidence, urging you to believe in yourself. FIRST is dedication, wholeheartedly committing yourself. FIRST is transition, evolving into the person you aspire to be. Throughout the years, we became a family with tens of members, hundreds of volunteers, and thousands of individuals, from a team only with dreams. If we have inspired a single person with the FIRST soul, changed their life through STEAM, and ignited a passion for innovation, we believe it is unmatched by nothing else.

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.

Our ability to turn small crumbs into impactful endeavors defines our uniqueness. Three years ago, a 7-year-old student from Mardin reached us, seeking a New Year gift. We embraced all their friend's wishes, achieving them collectively with friends and teachers from our school, evolving into a 3-year-old project "Wish Tree" with a total of 3 different cities and 3 different schools, 261 children, 141 gifts, and 120 new boots together with hundreds of scarves we knit for them as a community.

Judge Feedback

Who/When	Feedback
Mar 23, 2024 10:25:44 AM EST	As a whole team, in which area do you think improvement is necessary to have a better impact on the world? Whether it's our projects, in-team situations, aims, organization, or anything else you feel is important. Our best wishes. An area the team has an opportunity to improve. Something that really impressed the judges.

Essay

In 2019, a group of students, eager to learn what had not been taught to us, committed to pursuing their dreams and leading the change in the world through STEAM and passion, ignited a flame. Over the years, that flame evolved and developed with unique ideas, diverse personalities, and a shared belief in our cause, turning into a torch that illuminates the darkness. This is the story of FLARE.

We learned on the first day that FIRST is not just about competing with robots. Why create competitions centered around students when adults could potentially outperform us with robots and in other aspects? It's because FIRST stands for the future and revolution, emphasizing new generations. Team 8054 FLARE, redefines its members, volunteers, and community by aligning with their goals, aspirations, and needs, offering opportunities for self-fulfillment. Anyone can join us and discover a place for themselves and their dreams through our co-organized, barrier-free sub-teams.

As an intertwined team, we recognize that each of us bears responsibility not only for our team and its future but also for the entire FIRST community. Change comes from unity, and our tight-knit group of mentors and alumni is easily distinguishable in this matter, surrounded by a circle of inquisitive members even during school breaks, actively brainstorming and shaping the future 24/7. Our members, alumni, and mentors actively volunteer at every level of FIRST, including FRC, FTC, and FLL, undertaking crucial roles such as referees and inspectors.

Creating is harder than thought. Founding an FRC team, building robots, and managing documents in just a year without any help? SCARY! Our journey crossed paths with many students who wanted to start a team but had no idea where to begin and what steps to take. They needed more than FIRST's maps and signs; they needed an audible and interactive navigation system.

Therefore, we established the FLARE ROBOT ACADEMY (FRA), a guiding platform that provides individual mentorship, including meetings, documents, and visits for FRC, FTC, FLL, Vex, and Blender rookie teams. We conduct regular meetings with the FRA member teams, allowing them to directly ask us questions and learn. We share everything FIRST taught and experienced with us through these teams, emphasizing FIRST's value of 'Gracious Professionalism'." FRA covers every aspect of a rookie's journey, from registration to workshop setup, STEAM activities, award submissions, and competitions. With the FRA program, we established the 4th FRC team in NETHERLANDS, a VEX team in Turkey, and guided one FRC and one FLL team, previously established but left unsustainable. Within the FRA program, we launched our 2-year-old scouting app, 'FLARE SCOUT,' available on both IOS and Android for all FRC teams. The application greatly facilitates scouting in competitions, ensuring information confidentiality for everyone.

Childhood memories are never forgotten. To introduce FIRST to everyone in our society, we published our first storybook named "Kalbini Bulan Robot". It's filled with values of friendship, self-belief, and love, leveling down the age of meeting FIRST and its values at the age of 6. We spearheaded the story and illustrations, incorporating the creative and colorful feedback of 120 preschool children. They heard the story during our preschool storytelling sessions and brought our book pages to life with their vivid imagination. "Kalbini Bulan Robot" is available for free download on Google Play Books and our website, vocalized by our members for visually impaired children interested in STEAM.

Parİltı Support Association for Visually Impaired Children, based in Istanbul, is dedicated to assisting visually impaired children throughout their lives. Our collaboration identified a shortage of "educational-

entertaining toy” materials. Through the 'Make It Braille' project, in partnership with FORD Otosan, we strive to pioneer the introduction of Lego Braille Bricks to Turkey. Unlike regular LEGO bricks, these specially designed ones have Braille studs corresponding to numbers and letters. Our project “Make It Braille, aims to expand the sets to cover the Turkish alphabet fully, including “ç,ğ,ö,ü” and “ı”. We aim for this “educational-entertaining toy” that serves as a gift to our motherland and its visually impaired citizens, particularly children.

Together, stories change. We proudly became the first FRC team to volunteer and introduce Çorbada Tuzun Olsun (ÇOTUN) to our society. ÇOTUN is a food bank located in Cihangir, that looks after the needs of our homeless citizens and caters to the food needs of our homeless citizens. As Team 8054, we volunteered for 19 days, investing 114 hours at ÇOTUN, preparing 2,850 bowls of food to be shared. Our efforts inspired 7 other FRC teams to volunteer. Initiating the first FRC-ÇOTUN Volunteer Network, we enlisted 44 regularly ÇOTUN volunteers. With 7576 and 9160 contributing 16 volunteers, we collectively cooked for 6 days and 36 hours as 4-member groups. Our foundation (FMV) learned about ÇOTUN through us, inviting ÇOTUN executives to other campuses to meet with students.

In 2022, a child from Mardin reached out to us. He had always dreamed of a New Year's present but couldn't receive one due to economic challenges faced by both his family and community. In response to this heartfelt wish, we launched our initiative "Wish Tree," bringing together our school community, teachers, and students to provide not only for him but also for all of his friends the New Year gifts they wished for. In 2022, we delivered 60 gifts to 60 children in Mardin, and in 2023, we extended our reach to Şırnak, providing 80 gifts to 80 children. Through the "Wish Tree" initiative, we knitted hundreds of beanies and scarves with our school community for those touched by a New Year's gift, all in the spirit of the "Görünmez Bağlar" project. In 2024, shifting our focus to the unfortunate earthquake in our country, we revamped our projects. For the New Year in 2024, we supplied 120 pairs of new boots to every child studying at Karaçay Primary School in Hatay. Our gifts arrived just as their newly built school opened for education. And the hundreds of scarves we knitted were sent to a container city, warming the hearts of families who lost their homes. More than 300 volunteers, including adults, students, and the elderly, united with us in our mission through the "Wish Tree" and "Görünmez Bağlar" projects.

Within our “crumbs to changes” approach we embraced, we launched the “Book Fellowship” initiative. Upon receiving a request from a teacher from Van, expressing concern about her student's inadequate supply of books to be used for the high school entrance exam; we connected with friends, relatives, and students all united in striving for a better education dream 1500 km away. We fulfilled a school of 8th graders' needs, introducing our team and FIRST, written on small notes inside donated books.

We have been providing coding education to primary school girls across Istanbul intending to break biases against women in technology. Our classes in the "Girls Who Code" program, mainly consisting of children experiencing computers for the first time, offer personalized attention for quality education. Through the program, we've delivered 92 hours of one-on-one coding instruction to 23 children over the past two years. In collaboration with FORD OTOSAN this year, we are expanding the project to reach a broader audience.

Together with "Girls Who Code," we launched Blender training sessions for middle school students across Istanbul, emphasizing three-dimensional modeling and animation. We provided instruction in 3D object design, introducing students to the Metaverse world. Each student, equipped with the basics of the Blender program, was guided to create their 3D object designs. Through our course, we reached 24

students directly and over 150 through aligned YouTube content.

Our future is the new generation, just as FIRST's is. Since our foundation, we have been organizing STEAM Weeks in our school every year. We conducted robot, image processing, 3D, and digital design workshops, introducing STEAM, FRC, and FIRST to all levels of education, reaching up to 4800 students. Many of the secondary school students we introduced to FIRST have become members of our team. Through their familiarity with FRC during STEAM Weeks, it has become easier for them to be part of the FIRST community.

Leading the effort in cleaning and conserving nature, our team has been collaborating with Let's Do It on the 21st of September World Cleanup Day for two years. In 2022, we cleared the Moda Coast of human-generated waste, and in 2023, we tackled the 6 km long Büyükada Eco-Road. To amplify our impact, we became the sole Field Leaders at the Let's Do It Organization of Beykoz Sports Forest, guiding 20 adults and 3 children, and successfully cleaning 8,479,000m² of forest area.

Contributing to reducing our carbon footprint and raising awareness about the environmental crisis, we pedaled together on the 27-kilometer Kadıköy-Pendik route with the contribution of FRC teams such as 9026. Now, "Pedal with Flare" has evolved into not only an awareness day for us but also a fun event where we come together with other teams.

With the support of our mentors from our school, FORD Otosan, 3M, Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, Rockwell Automation, and DOW, alongside the collaboration of our sponsors in our projects, we are well-prepared and actively seeking every opportunity to change the world through the mission of FIRST together.

We strive to be the voice for those in need, individuals whom society overlooks, those who have aims, and those who aspire to make an impact on FRC, FIRST, and most importantly, the world. We nurture unspoken ideas, untouched traces, and dreams into reality, transforming faint melodies into Crescendo's.

We are FLARE, more than a robotics team. ;

