

FIRST Impact Award - Team 180

2025 - Team 180
Team Number
180
Team Nickname
S.P.A.M.
Team Location
Stuart, FL - USA
Describe the impact of the <i>FIRST</i> program on team participants within the last 3 years. Think about percentages of those graduating high school, attending college, in STEM careers, leadership skills, and serving as mentors/sponsors in <i>FIRST</i> programs.
Students learn diverse skills (technical, communication, leadership) and the FIRST core values through hands on mentorship 98% of S.P.A.M. alumni pursue higher education, many go on to work in STEM fields for organizations such as NASA, Disney, and Google Since 2022 S.P.A.M. has awarded \$15,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors S.P.A.M. alumni continue their involvement in FIRST- 10 S.P.A.M. alumni currently mentor FIRST teams
Describe your community along with its unique opportunities and circumstances. Think about your geographic region, diversity of town/school, language barriers, socioeconomic barriers, and cultural expectations.
Martin County, FL - small, rural county in FL; population 163,315k, 18.000k students in school district We provide access to a hands-on STEM education for every student in Martin County including 5 public high schools, private schools, and homeschoolers S.P.A.M. established strong, enduring relationships with the county and school district- recently began establishing a long-term STEM Center, to serve as a hub for hands-on STEM learning, robotics, and a foundation for future growth
Describe the team's methods, with emphasis on the past 3 years, for spreading the <i>FIRST</i> Mission in ways that are effective, scalable, sustainable, and creative.
S.P.A.M. has a deep-rooted history of doing demos at local events such as the MC Fair, Stuart Airshow, and Christmas parade- create visibility, drive recruitment of students, mentors, and sponsors Hosted battle bots for a state-wide event. This raised awareness of FIRST and S.P.A.M. We gained three new mentors, and two students. Six Camps raising awareness, team sustainability, and \$10, 000
Describe your team's goals and the progress you have made towards them to fulfill <i>FIRST's</i> Vision.
We are working on a contract with the MCSD to begin expanding our facility in order to host classes for daily STEM field trips focusing on FIRST and our sustainability for the future. This would expand the exposure to FIRST of almost every grade school student. Offer our award-winning facility, mentors, and students for collaboration with three rookie FLL teams,1 rookie FTC team, and any FRC teams needing practice space.
What impact has your team seen from your efforts described in the above question? How does your team measure impact?
S.P.A.M. students support the progression of FIRST programs- 90% of students volunteer at FIRST events Recruitment - we gained three new mentors along with 18 FLL team members, and 10 FRC members. S.P.A.M.'s

new FLL and FTC teams have been progressing well over the course of their season.

Please provide specific examples of how your team and team members act as role models within the *FIRST* community with emphasis on the past 3 years. How do you share these best practices with other teams?

We host and run two FLL events and provide positions and training for other FRC and FTC teams to join us at events. Community role models at local events: Open Houses, STEM Nights, Science Events, Christmas Parade, Stuart Airshow, Martin County Fair, etc to give FIRST awareness. We present to the Martin County School District and Superintendent Maine on a bi-monthly basis informing them of our robot and team. We have a weekly newsletter that goes out to our sponsors and community.

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

S.P.A.M. publishes a comprehensive, low-resource scouting system known as S.P.A.Malytics every year for over a decade- garnered 1151 clicks on ChiefDelphi over the past 3 years- raises competitive floor for teams with little access to technology S.P.A.M. has started 3 FLL teams and 1 FTC team this season. We are hosting them as well as actively involved in running the teams.

What other initiatives have you created, grown, sustained, or participated in (*FIRST* or otherwise) to help inspire young people to be science and technology leaders and innovators? What outcomes have you seen from your efforts in the past 3 years?

Six Summer Camps since 2023 for @180 students with this year seeing 90% of our rookie FLL and FTC teams were camp attendees. The season before we only hosted 2 summer camps. S.P.A.M. regularly hosts STEM summer camps, robotics classes at the library, and Boy Scout merit badge classes to inspire younger students in our community

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

We have a strong, growing relationship with our district We provide monthly updates to school board, are regularly featured on school district social media and press releases SPAM Center, a 6,500 sf robot building space that was given to us by our school board STEM Center, adjacent building being developed as a field trip opportunity for our local schools Partnership with ESC Director - assisting us to set up our STEM Center to emulate the ECS model.

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

Team Mentors all taking a training run by Ken Woods on EDI and Team Response All adults must take the 2 hour training and sign the Mentor Agreement All adults must register with FIRST and go through YPP. All mentors who travel with the team must become a Level 2 Volunteer with the MCSD

Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will be sustainable.

The team has a Funding Board, Adult Board and a Student Board that works together to make sure all aspects of the team are followed. The Boards vote on any initiative or decision that must be made before being shared with the team, alumni, and parents. Adopt-a-Rookie program which every veteran adopts a rookie to make sure each student has additional support. Monthly community outreach initiatives that include weekly newsletters and presentations.

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

Our team membership has not grown as much as we had planned. We think it is because of us becoming a 501c3 that each team member must fundraise for the whole team rather than just their own expenses. We are working on

making sure every team member gets a portion of their fees covered by sponsorships, grants, and fundraising. We are actively engaged with the five schools, homeschooling community, and private schools to encourage a more diverse population of students and girls to join our team.

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, particularly noteworthy, or had a large impact.

A unique aspect of our team is our explosive growth outreach plan, aimed at expanding by attracting more students, securing sponsors, increasing funding, and enhancing our community presence. This initiative fosters greater student engagement in STEM and FIRST while building lasting relationships with local businesses and organizations, ultimately increasing our team's impact on both students and the community.

Judge Feedback

	What was the part of our awards submission that could be improved upon the most, and why? An area the team has an opportunity to improve. Something that really impressed the judges.
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Essay

Through our enduring partnerships with our county, school district, and sponsors, S.P.A.M. achieves FIRST's mission and creates a lasting impact in Martin County. By maintaining our local relationships, we continue to expand our ability to provide hands-on STEM education to students in our region. Hundreds of students have gained skills and interest in STEM because of FRC 180 and have been inspired to carry our mission beyond their time on the team. S.P.A.M. has the power to create STEM superheroes!

S.P.A.M. has been able to extend the reach of FIRST through our summer camps and events for many seasons. This past year, we hosted three camps: two during the summer and one over Thanksgiving. These camps cater to an age range of 5-16 and have grown by 140 students since the previous season. These camps help kids learn about robotics and build FTC robots. The purpose of our team expanding these camps is to help kids not only learn about STEM but also generate excitement about FIRST and STEM. We raised \$10,000 with just two of the camps through our outreach and plan to continue hosting camps in the future. In addition to our camps, we have also created and run three FLL teams, an FLL Explore team, and an FTC team this past off-season. S.P.A.M. is not only hosting these teams but is also actively involved in running them as well as mentoring them. This is in addition to the 38 FLL teams and two FTC teams started by S.P.A.M. Moreover , we run weekly CAD and programming classes for rookies and members looking to branch out and expand their skills. This past December , we held an FLL event in which three of our FLL teams competed, and the event was run by our FRC students. We had 16 teams participate, and we raised \$2,000 from the competition. Another event we hosted and ran was a combat robotics competition, where we gained three mentors and provided exposure to FIRST to all attendees. A significant reason we have been able to start and run these new teams is because of our new facility. This expansion has allowed our team to increase awareness of S.P.A.M. and FIRST in our community.

Right before the start of the 2024 season, we were able to move our pit to a 6,500-square-foot building owned by our school district as part of a new partnership with them. This allows us to have enough space to host our new FLL and FTC teams as well as other FRC teams for practice on our full field. During that same season, we hosted three FRC teams-the Dirty Mechanics, Children of the Swamp, and Horsepower-to practice at our location . Our newly founded FLL and FTC teams also operate out of our facility, where they program and develop robots under the mentorship of some S.P.A.M. members. We also use this facility to host our FRC Kickoff and end-of-year celebrations. In addition

to our FRC Kickoff in January, we now host an off-season team kickoff to reach new students as well as introduce them to our off-season classes and prepare them for build season. Furthermore, all sponsors are invited to both of our kickoff celebrations to engage with our team and see our progress. By participating in a variety of events in our community, S.P.A.M. can reach potential mentors, sponsors, and, most importantly, new students to encourage participation in both STEM and FIRST. Some annual events we regularly partake in include the Stuart Airshow, the Martin County Fair, and the Stuart Christmas Parade. The Stuart Airshow, named a top 10 airshow in America by USA Today, is a three-day event attended by around 40,000 people. At this event, our students clocked an estimated 24 hours to expand knowledge and awareness of FIRST, STEM, and S.P.A.M. While the team no longer builds out of the Martin County Fairgrounds after moving to our school district facility, S.P.A.M. continues to share about our team, our mission, and FIRST's mission at the Martin County Fair. Through interactive displays, STEM booths, and demos, we can promote FIRST to 76,000 people at the Martin County Fair. At the Stuart Christmas Parade, we passed out 75 pounds of candy to kids along a two-mile route while leading team cheers and displaying robots from past competition seasons, as well as informing people along the route about our team and how to get involved. Additionally, S.P.A.M. often participates in smaller events to help foster a passion for STEM in the youth of Martin County. As one example, we held a class for BSA Troop 822 to help them earn their Robotics Merit Badge. Overall, these events have allowed us to inspire the next generation to pursue STEM in the future through robotics education. Another way that S.P.A.M. has been growing our team, as well as FIRST, is by actively encouraging a strong relationship between our team and important figures and organizations within our community. At the start of the school year, S.P.A.M. visited the principals of the five main high schools in Martin County. We had students give them care packages to strengthen our relationship with the schools. S.P.A.M. is always present at the school club fairs and open houses hosted at the local high schools. Additionally, S.P.A.M. had the honor of presenting to business owners at the Martin County Chamber of Commerce, which resulted in leadership guru John Maxwell offering coaching at no cost, as well as an Indian River State College board member wanting to partner with our team. Our relationship with our school board has allowed us to expand in many ways, such as gaining the facility we now use to mentor teams and run FIRST events. To continue to strengthen this relationship, we provide monthly presentations to keep them informed and involved with our team, as well as send out weekly newsletters that include our activities and progress on the robot. All of this has allowed S.P.A.M. to strengthen the connections between our team and prominent community members and organizations. This strengthened relationship enables S.P.A.M. to increase the community's awareness and participation in FIRST.

By developing strong relationships within our community, S.P.A.M. achieves its mission of giving young people the skills, confidence, and resilience to build a better world by providing access to a world-class robotics program. S.P.A.M. has a history of nurturing student interest in STEM careers and helping members pursue them after high school. Our team prides itself on the fact that 100% of S.P.A.M. alumni pursue higher education, and we have awarded \$16,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors over the past three seasons alone. This shows that S.P.A.M. has made an impact, encouraging a love of learning within our members that extends beyond their time as students in FIRST. While on S.P.A.M., students grow to become advocates for STEM and FIRST in their communities, with students performing roughly 647 total hours of community outreach just this season so far. Students who graduate from S.P.A.M. are not only passionate about their own education but are eager to inspire the next generation. Many of these students have gone on to work in STEM fields for organizations such as NASA and Google. Beyond pursuing careers in STEM fields, many of our alumni volunteer and mentor in FIRST. Of our 34 mentors, 11 are FRC alumni, and six of these mentors were once members of S.P.A.M. Because of the inclusive and rewarding environment that S.P.A.M. fosters, our graduates are committed to their communities, education, and STEM as a whole. In conclusion, FRC 180, S.P.A.M., has a long-standing history of growth and impact, having been founded in the '97/'98 season and operating for over twenty-seven years. Our team, composed of students from local high schools and homeschoolers, thrives with the support of professional engineers, teachers, community members, and alumni. Located in Martin County, Florida, we benefit from a strong partnership with our local school district. Through tireless efforts to attract mentors, students, and sponsors, S.P.A.M. has continually worked to advance the mission of FIRST. By collaborating with sponsors, the school district, and community organizations, FRC 180 remains dedicated to spreading the message of FIRST and fostering a culture of innovation and teamwork. ;

