

FIRST Impact Award - Team 2974

2025 - Team 2974
Team Number
2974
Team Nickname
Walton Robotics
Team Location
Marietta, GA - 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.
This year, we surveyed team members who graduated from our team in the last three years. We learned that 100% of them attended college, and 87.2% of them are now working in STEM-related fields. Two of our current mentors started their FIRST journey as members of our team. Our team alumni stay involved with FIRST events by mentoring teams and attending competitions. Finally, several of our mentors began supporting our team when their kids were members, but stayed long after their kids graduated.
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.
While our community's socioeconomic status is generally high, our team supports areas in our community where STEM resources are limited. We prioritize outreach in our county's Title I elementary schools where we introduce STEM to students who might not have similar educational opportunities. We overcome language barriers by designing easy-to-follow, hands-on activities. We also conduct weekly workshops with our school's special education class to introduce STEM to another DEI population.
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.
For the past seven years, except during covid, we've held summer camps for young students, and we stay creative by updating our camp programs, such as this year's Forensics Camp. We mentor a new FLL team, host a popular FLL tournament, and we are mentoring two FTC teams at our build site. Finally, we hold outreach events, such as GirlsFIRST Movie Nights, to introduce girls to FIRST. We use surveys to gather feedback so our programs remain effective and sustainable.
Describe your team's goals and the progress you have made towards them to fulfill <i>FIRST's</i> Vision.
To fulfill FIRST's vision, we not only engage kids at a young age, but we keep them engaged in FIRST and robotics. Our goal is to have a team where every member has attended a team outreach event or participated in a WRT mentored team before joining FRC. Through surveys, we have confirmed that 53%

of our current team members attended or participated in one of our team's outreach events before joining the team. Also, 20% of our FRC members are also former members of our FTC teams.

What impact has your team seen from your efforts described in the above question? How does your team measure impact?

By building and maintaining a strong pipeline, we see members join our team with a lot of FIRST experience. Students understand FIRST's culture and they also come to us with new ideas and they are experienced at implementing them. This year, our FTC pipeline brought seven new members to the team, including five rookies. We track impact through outreach attendance and member surveys. Recent surveys of our team's alumni also help us measure the team's impact on pursuit of STEM degrees and careers.

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?

Over the past three years, our team served as role models to other FIRST teams we've mentored. This year, we mentored a local FLL team, and we have mentored two FTC teams in our build site over the past two years. We share and explore best practices with other FRC teams during our annual kickoff event, and we host a large FLL tournament, where team members serve as judges and referees. We present regularly at GAFIRST Symposium and invite other local teams to use our full-size practice field.

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

This year, our team began mentoring a local FLL team of twelve students. Three years ago we started two FTC teams which operate from our build site, and we still mentor these 24 FTC kids today. Through our Destination Engineering program, we have assisted almost 20 FRC teams that practiced on our full-size field, including a Rookie All Star team and teams that reached the Finals at Worlds. At competition, we are known by teams, mentors, and judges as the place to go when a team needs help.

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?

11 years ago, we started GirlsFIRST as a program to inspire young girls to become STEM leaders. Over the years, we have sponsored many GirlsFIRST events, including our Movie Nights, which highlight women in STEM. This year, we brought back the Mega GirlsFIRST Event which provided girls with opportunities to engage in STEM through attending all-female speaker panels and taking part in hands-on engineering challenges. Our outreach efforts have inspired attendees, many of whom joined our team.

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.

Our team fosters strong relationships with sponsors like Novelis, who we worked with to develop our CanBot robot to promote aluminum recycling. Several team members have participated in internships, and alumni have secured jobs with our team sponsors. We have an established relationship with the Cobb County School District, and multiple Title I schools, where we spread the message of STEM. We have received mentor and funding support from Atlanta corporations such as Carrier, Carter's, and UPS.

Describe your team's efforts in the past 3 years to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within your team, <i>FIRST</i>, and your communities.	
Our team makes STEM accessible to all students. We provide robotics to underserved populations through our programs at Title I schools. We use our GirlsFIRST program to introduce young girls to STEM and to encourage them to join FIRST. Currently, 50% of our Executive Team are girls. We promote diversity of thought and we are more than just our robot. Over the past three years, we added new creative roles on our team, providing more opportunities to contribute to the team.	
Explain how you ensure your team and the initiatives you have created will be sustainable.	
To remain sustainable, we focus on constant improvement while strengthening our roots. For example, we regularly review our summer camps/outreach programs and design new interactive activities to keep kids engaged, such as our Forensics Camp curriculum. Each year, our Executive team meets for a two-day retreat, where we plan for the upcoming year, including evaluating what is beneficial for the team and what needs to be improved.	
Highlight one area in which your team needs to improve and describe the steps actively being taken to make those improvements.	
When COVID ended, we took on a large class of rookies that are now an oversized class of seniors. In future years, we hope to have an equal number of students across grades, since the large senior class has developed cliques which affect team bonding. To create team cohesiveness, we have implemented additional team meetings where the entire team engages in activities. We have also implemented new social activities to strengthen our team culture by mixing team games with robotics activities.	
Briefly describe other matters of interest to the <i>FIRST</i> 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.	
We are focused on maintaining and strengthening our existing programs through data collection and reporting. In the last year alone, the team spent over 6,000 collective hours engaged in outreach efforts. We have begun collecting team member and alumni data (including college major and occupation information) to help measure the impact of our team. Beyond data collection, we are working to establish an alumni mentorship program that would allow our college alumni to mentor our team remotely.	
Judge Feedback	
How would you suggest effectively measuring the long-term impact of our various outreach programs beyond just participants and numbers? We want to open doors and pathways that can lead students to future success. An area the team has an opportunity to improve. Something that really impressed the judges.	
Essay	
In 2025, Walton Robotics (Team 2974) celebrated its 16th year of innovation and impact within the FIRST community. While our high school mascot is a Walton Raider, during Reefscape, we wanted to frame our story through the lens of the Raiders of the sea: Pirates. However, we are not a team of thieves or	

sailors. Instead, we are a team that embraces positive attributes of pirates, such as exploration and discovery. These attributes guide our outreach, development, and sustainability efforts. Like seasoned adventurers, we share our treasures with others, we map our path to success, and we maintain trusted companions and a supportive crew to navigate challenges. Sharing Our Treasure: Outreach/Community Impact: Walton Robotics prides itself on sharing resources and knowledge. For example, last year, we introduced a new shared treasure: our scouting app. The app, developed in-house, was intended not only to support our team, but also as a tool that could allow other teams at competition to quickly harness and apply scouting data. The app, which we posted online, reached over 400 teams at our regional competitions and Worlds, leading to more efficient strategy development. This year, our programming team worked with our strategy department to improve multiple aspects of the scouting app, based on user feedback. The new app is more accessible and intuitive for this year's game. In addition to our scouting app, we know that knowledge transfer over digital platforms provides additional opportunities to share our treasures. Using last year's Georgia FIRST Symposium attendance to identify topics of greatest interest, we introduced a series of technical videos this year to help other teams enhance their tech training as they design and build their robots. Our videos received positive feedback from viewers, and to date, they have garnered over 5,815 views on both YouTube and Chief Delphi. While robots are important to us, we also understand FIRST's mission of being more than just building robots. We know that messaging is important, and our recently redesigned team website provides detailed information on all our departments, allowing us to market our team and FIRST to a broad audience. Our new branding kit provides our team a more unified identity, similar to a professional organization, which means our shared materials are as readily recognizable as they are beneficial to other teams. Our treasures are also shared with other teams in the physical realm. For example, our Destination Engineering (DE) program, which provides a full-size practice field for teams to use, is a critical aspect of support for other Georgia teams. Throughout the season we have had almost 20 teams use our field to work on their robots and designs. In previous years, 11 of these teams advanced to their regional finals, and three qualified for World Championships. Team 1771 and 1261 visited our facility over 15 times last year alone, and reported that without our field their success would be limited. A recently implemented survey revealed that teams often credit their success at competition directly to their time on our practice field. In addition to DE, we utilize our annual Kickoff event to drive collaboration with other FRC teams. This year's kickoff featured over 200 participants, who participated in a 12-step, mentor-led structured brainstorming session. We also developed and circulated two comprehensive worksheets that teams used to develop their robots through the build season. Beyond Kickoff, we also presented at the Georgia FIRST symposium, where over 200 FIRST Students and mentors attended. These efforts demonstrate our commitment to providing accessible, high-quality resources to the FIRST community. Through our team's history, we've learned that sharing our informational treasures works best when we involve kids at an early age. One of our most successful programs is our annual summer camp. This year, we reimagined our summer camp program to make STEM education more accessible. By implementing a flexible scheduling system with both morning and afternoon sessions, working parents could more easily enroll their children. We reduced the student-to-camper ratio to 1/3, ensuring more personalized attention for the kids. Our restructured curriculum now features age-appropriate tracks for nine different grade levels, with projects ranging from basic robotics to advanced programming. Last year, our camps served more than 60 students across 10 sessions throughout a one-week period. Finally, we've taken affirmative steps to share our treasures within our own team and school. We host workshops with special needs kids at our school to introduce them to STEM activities based on their current classroom curriculum. This year, we also formalized a program we began last year which pairs rookies on our team with veterans, based on interests and goals. We've also increased our team's visibility within our school by conducting robotics demonstrations at two pep rallies before over 2500 students. Our robots were featured at five of

our school's football games this year, two of which were televised across the State, further promoting STEM. Mapping Our Way to Success: Building the Pipeline Instead of pirate maps that lead to buried treasure, our maps highlight our STEM pipeline. We knew that our pipeline had a gap, and we filled that gap by creating a new FLL program. This year, we started new FLL teams and supported them with resources and mentors. Timber Ridge Elementary, one of our feeder schools, has seen growth in student engagement with FLL, as highlighted in their feedback survey. By supporting FLL teams, we are already envisioning a future in which students chart a path through a WRT supported FLL, FTC, and FRC team. In addition to starting new teams, we also continue to support other local teams by hosting a well-attended FLL tournament. This year, our tournament was attended by 11 teams of over 250 students, with 45 team volunteers and 50 parent volunteers to run the event. Our ongoing FTC mentorship is another location on our map to a sustainable STEM pipeline. Two years ago, we created a sustainable, student-led program which involved mentoring two FTC teams of 24 students at our build site. Today, we continue to mentor these FTC teams, providing technical guidance, competition preparation support, and resources. Our team worked over 1,700 hours with these two teams this season, helping one team achieve 9th place and the other team achieve 16th place at their league tournament. Feedback surveys demonstrate that our FTC kids intend to try out for our FRC team, showing that our pipeline is working. Finally, the big "X" on our map points to inspiring girls to become involved in STEM. Our team established GirlsFIRST over 10 years ago, and we continue to create new, impactful programs today. This year, we hosted a GirlsFIRST Mega Event, where six women from local companies such as Carters, Carrier, and Kimberly Clark spoke to young girls about their engineering achievements and successful STEM careers. Three of these inspiring women now mentor our team. We continue to host interactive events like our GirlsFIRST Forensics Camp and STEM Movie Nights and many on our team first learned of FIRST or WRT because of a GirlsFIRST event. This year, we continue to recognize our female leadership on the team - our student executive officers are 50% girls. Trusted Companions (Sponsors + Mentors): While pirates often are pictured with parrots to guide them, our guides are our sponsors and mentors – one of the best crews that a team could have. Our sponsors like Novelis, UPS, and Carrier continue to anchor our efforts. This summer, UPS hosted a GirlsFIRST Event at its Supply Chains Solutions global headquarters, where over 40 girls engaged in hands-on STEM activities alongside the daughters of company engineers. Over the past three years, Novelis has hosted our team at its offices five times, where we engaged with their industry experts. In the past year, four WRT students secured paid Novelis internships through FIRST, and two alumni landed co-ops at Novelis during their college years. With Novelis' help, we distributed over 700 STEM kits to underserved communities while working with over 50 Novelis managers from around North America to increase sustainability education. Our strong collaboration with Novelis was strengthened by our sponsored project to design, build, present CanBot to Novelis and Ball Corporation leadership. CanBot, which crushes aluminum cans to promote recycling, is featured at FRC competitions, and was even introduced by Novelis representatives at the Peachtree District Championship. To date, we've used CanBot to crush over 1000 cans. Our Mentors are the backbone of our crew. This year, we welcomed new mentors, including four women who bring diverse expertise and inspire our students to see themselves as future STEM leaders. UPS also provided us with a female project management mentor, in addition to our Presentations mentor. We are proud that four of our mentors are also former FIRST alumni. In an effort to generate additional data, we implemented new surveys of our alumni this year, to find out about the rest of our crew. We learned that, over the last three years, 100% of our alumni received a college education, and 85% are pursuing a STEM major. Our graduates have secured positions at leading companies including Novelis, Intel, NCR, and Toyota. As for our current class of graduating seniors, 100% are planning to attend college where they will pursue a STEM career. Conclusion: While we are not Pirates in the traditional sense, at Walton Robotics we see ourselves as swashbuckling adventurers as we refine our strategies, expand our horizons, and set sail

for success. When we look ahead, we remain committed to our goals: sharing our treasures, mapping the way to success, and relying on trusted companions to navigate future STEM challenges. ;

