

Cougars Gone Wired
2019 Chairmen's Essay
Awards Subteam

In a vast and mysterious universe, our team, Team 2996, aspires to spread knowledge and cooperation to the galaxy. The Cougars Gone Wired (CGW) solar system began in 2008 with a passion for learning and developing the FIRST Universe. We are the center of the solar system, bestowing life to the planets of FIRST, Community, and Sponsor Relations, with the help of our mentors *to boldly build what no one has built before*.

Like the sun's two main gasses, our team is made up of two crucial components; we are student-led and have a family atmosphere.

Every member participates in both a technical and a business team. There are 13 subteams managed by Vice Presidents, 8 of which are girls. From the initial interview to leading a subteam, we are constantly developing our leadership abilities to further the FIRST vision. We have used these skills to transform the culture of FIRST in our community, as our second nature.

With members from other schools, we fuse together by problem-solving and team building. The team has a family oriented atmosphere with support coming from everyone including parents and mentors. This bond does not end when we go home; we spend time in between school and robotics helping each other with homework, as we prepare for meetings over a meal. Outside of robotics, we often gather for pie, movie, and game nights. Because of the time spent together, we have a very strong gravitational force, which helps us bring life to the planets in our solar system.

When our students are working on a problem we look to our guiding star, our mentors. They focus on teaching rather than doing, allowing us room to learn and lead. Last year, we nominated our head coach, Bryce McLean, for the Colorado Springs School District 11 (CSSD11) Crystal Apple award; a prestigious teaching award given to one high school teacher each year. When our coach was presented with the award, the district also acknowledged our members as the first students to have nominated a teacher. All of our mentors encourage us in a multitude of ways to engage in all opportunities that FIRST provides.

This leads us to the "Sponsor Relations" planet, which is orbited by the moons Fundraisers, Sponsors, and CSSD11. These moons help us practice our professionalism so that we can grow our sponsor relations. As we develop relationships, we spread a positive message of FIRST, that in return, has helped provide our team with new career opportunities.

The B.P.O. Elks Lodge 309 is one of our biggest supporters. They have admired how we have impacted our community, and they have expressed their gratitude by providing their

facilities for our annual fundraiser dinner. Their dedication to our team has helped us spread both FIRST and STEM to the community.

In past years, Harris Corporation was just a sponsor. Recently, this has developed into an opportunity for team members to improve leadership skills. They have invited our student leadership to discuss future careers with their representatives, and due to our professionalism over the last 2 years, the invitation was opened to the entire team of almost 60 students.

CSSD11 offers us all the space needed to succeed in furthering our team's mission. Because of our dedication to our school and FIRST, the district has acknowledged our involvement by providing students an opportunity to earn a varsity letter.

At the end of build season, we showcase our expanded science, engineering, and technology skills. This is done by demonstrating our finished robot at a dinner for our district administration, sponsors, and parents. Without this valuable planet and its moons, the CGW solar system would not be able to expand the FIRST Universe.

Since the beginning, our community has been a huge part of our team; from elementary students to corporate sponsors, we have made a reputation of shining bright wherever we go. This growing influence has led to community organizations reaching out to us in order to 'wire-up' their STEM involvement. Interacting and developing relationships with our community is very important to us. This planet is "Community Outreach".

Last Spring, we had an unfortunate event in the CGW family, which started a fire in our hearts to develop a relationship with the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Our leadership came together to serve families, and we were unexpectedly touched by moments experienced. These moments are what drive us to give back to an ever growing love for our community.

A huge part of our mission is immersing FIRST and STEM into our community. Therefore we strive to implement these morals into every sector of our reach. For the last 2 years we have maintained a connection with the Therapeutic Recreation Program, where we led special education students of varying ages and disabilities through STEM-based activities, teaching them about simple machines, and demonstrating our robot.

Every year we bring our robot to the Cool Science Festival to explain the mission of FIRST, but this year we wanted to do more. We turned it into a new learning experience, where kids got a chance to drive and compete with VEX robots. Once finished, they received a 'driver button,' which excited them about their future in FIRST and our team.

This past summer, our team aspired to captivate students with the ideas of innovation. To do this, we wrote a hands on curriculum focused on team building and simple machines,

targeting local elementary and middle schools. This last fall, Audubon Elementary reached out to have us to present. What was thought to be a short, small demonstration turned into a 2 hour assembly to the entire school. We like to make these connections in order to light the path for schools to be a part of FIRST.

We want to continue engagement by providing the next steps with our annual Making A Difference Summer Camp. This 5 day program was developed 3 years ago, where our members led students in building and programming a simple VEX robot; then they were given a challenge to complete by the end of the week.

Everywhere we go, we bring pamphlets that talk about our team, sponsors, and FIRST. This year we attended or hosted 23 community, 8 sponsor, and 5 FIRST events and we will continue encouraging everyone to learn about and become a part of FIRST.

In our solar system, FIRST Outreach has the strongest gravitational pull. Community and FIRST Outreach have intersecting orbits, and we cannot have one without the other. This planet handles all of the events reaching and developing every level of FIRST, with a total of 4 moons: FLL Jr., FLL, FTC, and FRC.

The first of these moons is FLL Jr.. For the last 7 years, we have hosted an FLL Jr. Expo and gone to schools, mentoring up to 8 teams in one year. We have built connections with the students by helping them develop both their technical and communication skills. In the last 2 years of hosting this expo, we have had all levels of FIRST represented, sharing the next steps in FIRST.

This year, our largest event was the FLL Southern Colorado Qualifier. We are known for hosting high quality events, so Colorado FIRST asked us to host and run the largest qualifier in the state. In preparation for the event, we held work days to build field elements and tables for the 48 team event. For our first year running an FLL Qualifier, we were proud to have turned it into a huge success with FLL coaches commenting on how coordinated and “epic” the event was.

Our FTC moon is very small, with only one developing team at this level that we mentored from Black Forest. Since we have limited resources for FTC, we have been spending time on other levels of FIRST that benefit all ages. As our foundation grows, we wish to expand this area, aspiring to give purpose to all those interested in Science and Technology.

Our FRC moon is the most active, helping anywhere we can even when we are heavily in the middle of our build season. For the past 7 years, we have intentionally dedicated our resources to create a field for regional teams to use at the annual Colorado scrimmage that we

host. After this scrimmage, we bring our field to the Colorado Regional for use as a practice field for teams to utilize. We strive to give every team an equal opportunity to compete at their highest abilities, in the spirit of gracious professionalism.

On another side of this moon, we have held a Business Exchange for the past 2 years at the Colorado Regional. We began this because a team requested our assistance and brought to our attention the possible need for us to step up and help our FIRST community. After attending our meetings for 2 years, FRC Team 4068, BEARbotics used our structure to completely recreate the culture of their team, both business and technical.

Last September, FRC Team 1339, Angelbotics asked us to assist their Energy Day Festival, by bringing our field to use for an off season competition. This event was met with a lot of enthusiasm, where a local news station came out and interviewed 2 of our girls for coverage of the event. We recognize the necessity for advancement of FIRST, and we endeavor to create a community of support, as teams have done for us in the past.

As every planet orbits a central star, all of these planets orbit Team 2996. We are learning from our mistakes as we make life long relationships, representing an integral part of the FIRST Universe. The community has frequently reached out to us to host, assist, or attend events; each time we graciously accept, transforming the culture of our community and FIRST. Our student led team has enabled us to establish a measurable impact within the community, giving purpose to our accomplishments and emulating an admirable example of FIRST. With the support of our many partnerships, we are able to enhance all cultures that orbit CGW, by developing progressive life skills in future leaders, *building what no team has built before.*