

Chairman's Award Essay Submission

Team 2996

Cougars Gone Wired

As I walked into the room and sat down at the Special Projects table, I could tell something was wrong. Something was missing. I asked someone what was going on and they said that Mr. McLean, Team 2996's Primary Staff Advisor, went to the hospital that day to have open heart surgery. We knew that this day was coming but the reality of what was happening was beginning to take its toll on all us. No one was saying anything. The air around me felt thirty pounds heavier. As I glanced around the room at all of the team members; they all looked so upset. Kyle Hensley, our CEO, looked really stressed. Even though it was early into the season, the prospect of assuming command of the team until Mr. McLean's return was a bit daunting. For a moment, just for a moment, I wondered whether we would be able to get things together in Mr. McLean's absence. I thought back to some of our earlier meetings when the atmosphere wasn't so dour.

We are a young team with "big shoes" to fill after a "Cinderella-like" Rookie Season in 2009 that can only be described as "phenomenal." In our first year, we have about 37 student members and 6 mentors. Currently we have about 52 students and 6 mentors. The number of female students has doubled from 5 to 10. We are fortunate to have all our mentors back for a second season, with the exception of one. As a result of the success we had our first year; we have picked up two more. Most of our mentors our professional engineers from the community.

As one who joined the team later, I have been impressed with the strong bond that seems to exist among the members of Team 2996. I have been told that this bond was already there and has been strengthened by their participation in FIRST Robotics. As an outsider of sorts, I worried about not fitting in since I attend one of the other D-11 high schools. I have found Team 2996 to be very welcoming. I had a number of the members take me under their wing. I think that is why I was asked to write the essay because of the perspective I bring.

Team 2996 is divided into two teams, which are further divided into different subteams to handle different tasks, Technical (System Integration, Programming, Manipulator, Animation, Mobility, Electrical and Special Projects) and Business (Community/Media, Awards, Finance, Web & Communication and Scout). Each member is expected to serve on a subteam within the larger teams. I had the opportunity to visit all the different subteams in each team before making a decision about where I thought I would be the most useful. Not being a part of last year's team, I don't have anything to compare it with except the comments made by other team members who talk about how much better the communication is and how being on both teams has led to more participation across the board as well as giving them a better understanding of the process as a whole.

I also found out about the ways in which Team 2996 has helped in the Colorado Springs community. We have acted as mentors for the FIRST Lego League Teams at Galileo, Jenkins and West Middle Schools in D-11. Our membership helped put on FIRST Lego League competition with Russell Middle School, another D-11 school. We participated in Coronado High School Homecoming Parade with the robot handing out candy to the kids watching the parade.

As you can see, Cougars Gone Wired can accomplish many things in a short amount of time. Many people showed up and watched the robot going around and giving all the kids candy. The robot had a large plastic box attached to the top that had a door, which, when a button on the controls was pressed, the door would open and release candy into a tray attached to the robot.

Team 2996 has fought hard in these two glorious years of being a part of FIRST Robotics. They have gone through many struggles and challenges along the way. During the 2008 to 2009 season, Team 2996 was able to win the Rookie All-Star Award and won the award for website design and animation at the regional. In fact, the animation got into the top five videos in the nation and actually won second place. Cougars Gone Wired has become a strong power in the FIRST community.

Over the past two years we have had many sponsors. Our main sponsors are VERTEC and AEROFLEX. Also, District 11 board of education gave Team 2996 a quite sizable donation last year. This year, AEROFLEX has given us a load of spare materials from their pile of leftovers. We have received a \$1500 dollar donation from a private donor. We have also been provided with pizza and other food during several of our meetings from the Coronado High School counseling and the parents of Team 2996. Many groups of people have become involved in Team 2996's operation.

Over this short amount of time, Team 2996 has been able to grow a bond strong enough to call a family. These people were born to do something great, and they are already on their way to changing the world. Who knows what they might be able to do after they leave FIRST Robotics. Many people are not sure what we are capable of and what we might do in the

future. In years to come, many people will talk about how they were a part of this everlasting memory that is Cougars Gone Wired. Many people will have gone and passed through the robotics family of Team 2996. These people have been the greatest group of people I have known. I thought that because I am from a different school, people would treat me different. At first, I was right, but it didn't take too long for me to fit in with a group of them and start enjoying spending twenty-eight hours a week at Coronado High School.

Many of the old members of Team 2996 have gained scholarships to college. They got scholarships because people have noticed that FIRST is a group of intelligent individuals. They will now be able to go and become people that can one day change the world. These people are some of the most capable people I have ever met. For example, Jenna was able to put together an Autodesk version of our robot. Scott is one of the smartest people I know, able to do so many things that I would never dream of being able to do with electronics. There are many others that have great abilities that have helped them this far in their lives, and probably help them throughout the rest of their lives.

The family known as Cougars Gone Wired is growing and growing every day. First, there was me, the newbie in the group. Then, a few months later, Lena Demuth joined the team's ranks. We have had even more than just us two in the past few months. About five other people have joined since the time that I became a part of Team 2996. We have seen many people walk through the ranks of Cougars Gone Wired, and we hope to keep those doors wide open to anyone willing to spend a lot of time building a robot and a bond with other people of the group. I feel like a part of the family now that I have been here for the past four months. It will probably take people from Coronado a little less time to get into the swing of things than it

did for me because I am from Doherty High School. Many of them will probably see friends of theirs in Robotics and will fit in just fine in a couple of days. These intelligent individuals are truly remarkable people.

We work hard because there are only two ways to succeed, but we do not know the other. That's our motto. Our goal is to inspire everyone to truly believe in themselves and do what they want to do. We hope to encourage everyone we meet to follow in our footsteps and accomplish many great things. If we succeed in doing this, we will be able to create a better world for everyone. We work until we are exhausted, but we keep going, because if we do, we can change the world. We hope that we can inspire everyone we meet and we hope to one day see many more people join FIRST Robotics. We hope to give many people a chance to do something as fun and exciting as FIRST.

FIRST Robotics is something that every kid should have the chance to do sometime in their lifetime. If your kids like math, science, and technology, then FIRST Robotics is the right thing for them to do during either middle school or high school, or both. FIRST Robotics could also get your children a scholarship to college. Many kids that have gotten into FIRST have gotten a full paid ride to college. Many FIRST graduates have gone to engineering and technology colleges throughout the United States.

I have not been to one of the competitions yet, but I hear they are as crazy as any sports game. The audience cheers and screams just as crazily as people watching the Super Bowl. People come to the competition all dressed up in their team's uniforms, just like at a professional sports game. Also, some people had their faces painted their team's colors. Many

people treat FIRST competitions like they are professional sports competitions. I am excited to go to my first Robotics competition.

FIRST Robotics is a great thing for any young mind interested in technology. Someone interested in technology is a great recruit for a FIRST Robotics team. Team 2996 is in need of young minds ready to explore the wonders of a technological career.

Cougars Gone Wired is the place for any child that is willing to devote their time and skills to help a team grow and build a robot. We are in need of anyone that has the time and skills that we are looking for. One day, we may actually win the FIRST Robotics Challenge and bring home the gold. So if your child has these skills and meets our requirements, then he or she may one day build an outstanding robot that can change the world we live in.

If your child wants to have fun, learn a lot about technology, and possibly get scholarships, then FIRST Robotics is the right thing for you. Here at FIRST, we try our hardest to help all students succeed to be able to do whatever they dream of when they enter the career world. Cougars Gone Wired is here for anyone willing to learn about robotics and their many exciting programs. Junior FIRST Lego League, FIRST Lego League, FIRST Tech Challenge, and FIRST Robotics Challenge are all great activities. One of these programs will probably be able to suit your child's skills and personality. We hope to have you one day walk through our doors and into the open arms of Cougars Gone Wired.