

Chairman's Award - Team 772

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2021 - Team 772

Team Number

772

Team Nickname

Sabre Bytes Robotics

Team Location

LaSalle, Ontario - Canada

Describe the impact of the *FIRST* 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 *FIRST* programs as mentors/sponsors.

The FIRST program impacts our alumni each year by introducing a love of STEM and inspiring them to continue in related fields. Over the past 3 years, 100% of alumni attended post-secondary education, with 97% going into STEM fields. Our team's passion for FIRST is permanently implanted in our members' hearts, with 31% of them continuing their involvement in FIRST. The biggest thing that our members learn is soft skills that prepare them for future communication and networking opportunities.

Describe your community along with how your team addresses its unique opportunities and circumstances.

As we are located in LaSalle, Ontario, we are in close proximity to Windsor: the automotive capital of Canada. As a result, we have access to experienced sponsors and mentors. One of the biggest benefits to our community is our inclusive robotics family. Due to current circumstances with COVID-19, it is not safe for us to meet in-person. To remain active, we continue to virtually work on FIRST's at-home challenges, advance our variety of initiatives, and train new members for sustainability.

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?

To increase our reach and spread the message of FIRST, we work with other teams and attend unique events such as Art by the River and the Amherstburg Uncommon Festival. To prioritize which events to continue, we track the impact of our promotion of the FIRST message. We measure our reach to be about 100,000 people, but the true impact can only be measured in the lessons learned and smiles shared. Our Smile Logic stems from this sentiment: ensuring the happiness of others is always a priority.

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 team enjoys supporting the FIRST community: many volunteer at events; mentor and assist teams; and take part in FIRST Canada projects, live streams and more. 31% of alumni return to mentor and volunteer within FIRST. We act as role models by showing our dedication to FIRST and its Core Values, always having positive and ready-to-collaborate attitudes. We are described as "leaders in our area" by FRC Team 4903, and looked up to as a "big brother" to FRC Team 6875.

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

We have started, assisted, and mentored 158 FIRST teams, with 37% of that growth being within the last 3 years. Our FLL Without Borders program brings these opportunities around the world, giving everyone the chance to be a part of FIRST. We work hard to help teams remain active and sustainable by offering mentorship through our Sabre Hub, competition experience through events like FLL Blastoff, and resources like Business in a Box that shares business-related templates.

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?

One aspect of our FLL Without Borders program brings STEAM education and LEGO robotics to underexposed areas of the world. Through this program, we also run local camps that teach STEM concepts and problem-solving skills to young students, which has led many participants to join FIRST teams. We have also been a driving force behind the start of many FIRST connections in Windsor-Essex Chatham-Kent, including St. Clair College and the University of Windsor's support of the FIRST program.

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

Our team values our partnerships and puts effort into maintaining them through the years. We have partnered with FIRST teams such as FRC Team 1305 to build UV sterilization carts to donate within our community and FTC Team 16183 to help establish the presence of FTC in Ontario. Additionally, we have partnered with several local charities that receive the profits made from our team-run events. We have also established communication with Eric Walters to expand FLL Without Borders to Kenya.

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

Our team continuously promotes, builds, and maintains the values of EDI within our team, our community, and FIRST. Although it is easy to simply verbally endorse EDI, we want our actions to reinforce this. Through Project Synthesis, we run events such as our Women in STEM panel and social media campaigns for BLM and Indigenous Acknowledgement. We have established a gold-tier partnership with the student-run organization "LGBTQ+ of FIRST" to share resources with and educate our community.

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

We ensure that our team and initiatives stay sustainable through structured goals, active communication, and a passionate leadership program. SMART goals help us effectively structure our tasks in preparation for the future. Active communication is key in coordinating projects, updating our Sabre Hub, maintaining strong partnerships, etc. Our team is like a family, one that grows through school recruitment. Our Building Leaders program shapes members into future leaders to ensure sustainability.

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

We form partnerships with our sponsors by recruiting from local industries and through team contacts. To build strong connections, we continuously update, inform, and invite sponsors to our workspace, events, and annual sponsor banquets. In exchange for investment in our team, we offer them the opportunity to be promoted on our media platforms, at events, and on our Sabre gear. Our active communication helps us engage and maintain these sponsorships and connections throughout the years.

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

We find that we have struggled to maintain a connection during our transition to a virtual format. While in-person, we had the opportunity to continuously bond and communicate throughout all sections of the team. In a virtual format, we lose the personal connection, and it becomes more difficult to form these bonds and friendships. To help overcome this issue, we have frequent virtual team game nights, and we are planning more bonding activities to continue this trend in the future.

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

Our goal to give all students access to quality STEAM education has led us to run STEM camps, FLL without Borders, and start 158 FIRST teams. This set forth our partnership with GECDSE to bring robotics courses to our school, which allows more students to experience FIRST robotics. Last year, we started EnvironmentFIRST to educate and reduce our environmental impact. Our first project for this initiative was to collect old team buttons and recycle them to reduce what ends up in landfills.

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 prioritization of health and safety has led to an advanced safety program that shares resources with the FIRST community. We have recently branched out to cover mental health amid COVID-19 through Project Intellect. Outside of FIRST, our team promotes the Be a Donor campaign, spreads positivity online through #hopeisnevercancelled, and donates offseason event revenue to local charities such as Little Hands for a Cause, LaSalle Hangout, and the Welcome Centre: Shelter for Women and Families.

Essay

Where do we leave our PAWprint?
FRC TEAM 772 CHAIRMAN'S ESSAY

20 years. 158 FIRST teams started. Millions impacted. Since our inception in 2001, the Sabre Bytes Robotics Team 772 has grown the FIRST community exponentially and permanently left our PAWprint all over the world. It became our purpose to provide all community members with the opportunity to participate in FIRST and STEEAM (Science, Technology, Entrepreneurship, Engineering, Art and Mathematics), no matter their age, gender, socio-economic status, or overall place in the world.

LOOKING AT A PANDEMIC PAWSITIVELY

Team 772 is devoted to creating a PAWsitve impact in our community, even in the midst of a global pandemic. For us, outreach is more than just numbers; it's forming personal connections while educating our global community about FIRST and STEEAM. We wholeheartedly believe that FIRST is more than robots with the bonds that it forms, and we bring this sentiment into our outreach through our Smile Logic. This logic is the backbone behind why we do what we do and ensures that behind every task and event, from the biggest of worldwide programs to the smallest and simplest of interactions, our main focus is to spread the joy that comes from our passion for robotics. The goal of Smile Logic is to provide everyone that we impact with some form of happiness, which may be a broad objective, but has opened a door for us to learn the power of even the smallest smile. This has been a driving force in our continued efforts to advance our outreach, especially this year, where it has been a challenge to maintain our normal outreach virtually.

This year, as a replacement for our annual events, we have started multiple virtual projects to promote some of the causes we believe in through our social media platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. These projects include: Project Shield, which provides physical health activities and challenges to keep students engaged throughout quarantine; Project Intellect, which provides mental health resources to help our following cope with these tough times; and Project Synthesis, created in support of EDI (Equity, Diversity, & Inclusivity) through our advocacy of movements such as Black Lives Matter, our partnership with the LGBTQ+ of FIRST, our Indigenous Acknowledgment Challenge, and our Virtual Girls In STEM Event that will take place in April of 2021 to continue the tradition of hosting a similar event.

We are dedicated to helping our community as much as we can, so in June of 2020, we partnered with Team 1305 to build two UV Sterilization Carts. We donated one cart to our school: Sandwich Secondary (SSS), and the other to a long-term care facility: Huron Lodge, to be used to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. These carts were built during our only in-person meeting amid the pandemic, with limited team members present and proper safety precautions in place. To continue to spread the joy of FIRST to everyone and prevent the spread of COVID-19, we partnered with FIRST Canada to host two week-long Virtual LEGO Robotics camps for kids ages 8-14 in July and August of 2020. These Zoom camps encouraged creativity through STEEAM inspired activities and LEGO building opportunities: educating youth about the basics of the design process, programming, and the importance of FIRST Core Values.

In 2017, we started FLL Without Borders: a program that brings LEGO Robotics to underexposed children all over the world by providing them with LEGO kits, computers, mentorship, youth camps, and teacher training to ensure sustainability. In the past few years, we have brought this program to Morocco, Peru, Nunavut, and to hundreds of underserved youth across Windsor-Essex Chatham-Kent (WECK). We are actively working with students and mentors in Israel, France, Ireland, and other locations in Canada to continue to expand this program. This year, along with providing computers to an underserved school in WECK, we have started another project within this program: Project Kenya. We are currently working with famous Canadian author Eric Walters and his Creation Of Hope program to bring educational LEGO kits and PPE to the Rolling Hills Orphanage in Kikima, Kenya.

PAST PROJECTS PUT ON PAWSE

Due to the global pandemic, we are unable to host and participate in many in-person events and initiatives. In past years, we have been a very influential part of our community by starting and running many sustainable events. Our passion and dedication for FIRST was the driving force behind the start of the Windsor Essex Great Lakes District Event (WEGLDE) in 2014. The next year, we started the SouthWest International Off-Season Event, which we host at SSS through an ongoing partnership with the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB). This event acts as an introductory experience to the FRC program for rookie teams and team members from all over southwestern Ontario and the USA. Profits from this off-season event are given back to WECK teams attending the World Championships, and profits from the concession are donated to local charities.

Not only are we influential in our FRC community, having started and mentored 26 FRC teams, but we have left our PAWprint in all of the FIRST programs as well. We connect younger students to FIRST by starting and mentoring 32 FLL Explore teams and 95 FLL Challenge teams: with 40% of this growth being within the last 3 years. Our active mentorship prepares these teams for a successful season by providing them with training, competition tables, laptops, and assistance in attracting sponsors and mentors. In past years, we have hosted annual LEGO Blastoff and Practice Days for teams to train for their upcoming season. When FTC was introduced to Ontario in 2019, we started Team 16183 Club Sandwich at SSS, one of only 29 teams. The team was made up of junior members from grades 9 and 10 to introduce them to FIRST, with mentors from grades 11 and 12. Through this mentorship, Team 16183 had a successful season: achieving the highest game score and becoming Finalists of the Ontario FTC Championship, as well as learning leadership skills necessary for its sustainability. Since then, we have continued to grow the FTC community by starting 5 FTC teams, and we plan to further expand this growth next season.

Climate Change is becoming a greater concern for our generation, and we are committed to helping reduce our impact and educate our community on the importance of having a clean and healthy environment. In 2020, we started the EnvironmentFIRST Initiative to help improve the environment we live in and change the mentality around unsustainable practices both in and outside of the FIRST community. At events, teams hand out thousands of promotional buttons for students to collect, which eventually end up in the landfill. To help resolve this issue, we now collect used buttons to ensure they are recycled properly in a safe and sustainable way. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were forced to put this project on PAWse; however, we continue to be activists for our environment through social media and our participation in FIRST Project Green, and are excited to restart our recycling project when it is safe to do so!

EXPANDING IS PAWSSIBLE

We believe that expanding the FIRST community is continuous, and sharing our knowledge and passion for STEEAM is never finished. Many of our projects are based on this sentiment, where we are always looking to teach and encourage others through our love of robotics. In 2019, we partnered with GECDSD to introduce Robotics Courses at SSS. These courses enable us to impact more students by teaching them how to design and build a robot, as well as learn the Core Values of FIRST. In the past few years, this course has opened up a door for us to inspire hundreds of students in grades 10-12 at SSS, with plans to expand to grade 9 and other schools in the coming years.

For many rookie teams, the business section is not a priority since it is not essential to gameplay; however, our team takes pride in our business section and its knowledge (after all, there is an A and an extra E in STEEAM for this exact reason). As an experienced team, we love to share this knowledge base, which is why in 2019, we created the Business In A Box. This physical and virtual platform shares published resources necessary for an active and successful business team, including, but not limited to, sponsorship outlines, award guidelines, and document templates. This project started as a physical box but has now grown to be one of the major virtual aspects of the Sabre Hub, accessible to teams of all levels and locations.

Speaking of the Sabre Hub, what is it, you may ask? One of only four Ontario Super Hubs, our Sabre Hub welcomes teams into our workshop for materials, machine use, practice fields, and one-on-one assistance for any aspect of the team. With COVID-19, our machine shop has been shut down, so as a way to stay accessible throughout the pandemic, we opened up our virtual workshop to continue to support teams through online assistance and mentorship. In 2017, the Compass Alliance invited us to join their online global resource group, enabling us to reach even more teams!

Over the past 20 years, with emphasis on the past few, we have been devoted to spreading the joy of FIRST throughout our community and beyond. What started as a way to introduce students to fun STEM challenges soon became an opportunity for us to share our passion for robotics throughout our global community. FIRST opened a door to a world of innovation that we continue to grow as much as we can, where students get to learn new hard and soft skills and bond over shared interests in a safe and welcoming community. Through our many events and initiatives that stem from our vision of a better world, we reach across the globe, leaving behind a trail of PAWprints in the hearts of every person and place we've impacted.