

Engineering Inspiration

Team 2424 Robot Mafia from Bixby High School understands that our most important contribution to FIRST can be the influence that engineering makes in our school and community. We do our best to let everyone know what FIRST and the FIRST Robotics Competition is all about and we try to let others share in our enthusiasm. We hope to make the same impact on others that engineering and FIRST has made on us.

For the second straight year, team members from Team 2424 met with Callidus Technologies for a meeting covered by our local ABC news station. These meetings have given our members extra respect and interest in engineering, which we have turned around to spread to other students at our school and other schools in our community. Our excitement and enthusiasm has gotten the attention of many students in the school. People stopped by our workshop constantly throughout the build season to see what we were doing and what the robot does this year. Team members were bombarded with questions about FIRST and FRC and they used these opportunities to get kids as interested in engineering as possible. By doing our work in the middle of the high school, we've been able to give students a first-hand look at how fun engineering can be and we are attracting new kids to the team every year.

One of our biggest projects since our team started has been to get younger kids in Bixby started with FIRST. When we started an FLL team in the Bixby North Elementary, we thought the school would fund the team, and then later found out that was not going to be the case. The team decided that spreading FIRST was too important to let this stop us, so we paid for the fees and equipment for the FLL team out of our team money. We feel

that the investment is more than worth it and know that getting young kids excited about engineering is what FIRST is all about. Starting more FLL teams at the other Bixby elementary schools is one of our top priorities for the coming year. We also have plans to meet with high schools in Tulsa that do not have a robotics team and help motivate them to get involved with FIRST.

As a rookie team last year, we were fortunate enough to be able to attend the World Championship in Atlanta. We used that early success to get people excited about their prospects to join FIRST. Our “Cinderella story”, as one of our sponsors last year called it, was an example to other teams that even a bunch of kids with no money to fund a team (we had less than \$1000 after our regional, and we raised about \$20,000 in about two weeks) and little knowledge of what FIRST is about can be successful if they are excited and determined. This is the message that we’ve spread to the school and our surrounding community. Between the two news-covered Callidus meetings, our pending meeting with The Williams Companies and the dozen or more news articles we’ve been featured in, our team has found joy in spreading the message of engineering and FIRST.

This past September, two of our members attended the Oklahoma Robotics Summit to give a presentation on fundraising and team building. This presentation helped people interested in FIRST realize that teams were a very possible reality in their own school. It was another exciting opportunity for our team to spread FIRST’s message. Being asked to speak at this seminar was also an extreme compliment because we had only completed one season, so it was an indication that we were doing something right.

At the beginning of this school year, our team found out that both of our school mentors were taking jobs at other schools, and we were left without a teacher/mentor. We

took this opportunity to spread FIRST yet again, asking two teachers both new to Bixby and with little knowledge about FIRST to join our team. They were unsure what they were getting themselves in to, but they love it. We hope their excitement will help motivate the team the rest of this year and in years to come. This has also inspired many other teams. We have had multiple teams approach us and ask how we made it with no returning mentors. We told them our story and reassured them that it was possible to continue the teams they had started through any series of unfortunate events.

Bixby is also dedicated to helping other teams where needed. At the scrimmage that we attended in February, we did not play one single match because our team was spread about helping the other teams with Labview, trailer problems, mechanical problems, and many others. We wanted to spread the engineering spirit, not win a scrimmage. We all felt extremely excited about our job well done when we helped the other teams, and we look forward to inspiring engineering not only in our school, but from our entire community.

