

Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – October 2024

Equity – Treating everyone fairly, having equal opportunities and removing barriers.

Diversity – The way we are all different.

Inclusion – Creating space for everyone where differences are embraced.

The Power of Belonging and Community Spirit in the Face of Adversity

When disasters like Hurricane Helene strike, the devastation extends beyond physical damage—it can disrupt the very communities we rely on. In times like these, the sense of belonging and community spirit becomes more important than ever, and for many in our FRC world, these values are at the core of who we are.

Belonging is more than just being part of a group; it's feeling valued, supported, and included. For FRC teams, this sense of belonging is crucial to success. It encourages collaboration, risk-taking, and mutual support. Amid the chaos of disasters, when homes are destroyed and people are displaced, a robotics team can provide a source of stability and connection.

When the familiar structures of a community are lost, the emotional impact can be disorienting. For students and mentors, the loss of a community—whether it's their neighborhood or their team—can lead to feelings of isolation. However, teams that foster a strong sense of belonging can help provide a safe haven during uncertain times.

Community spirit is about more than robotics; it's about people coming together to support each other in times of need. In FRC, the spirit of collaboration goes beyond competition. We are part of something larger, and this mindset can be a source of resilience when disaster strikes.

After a hurricane, FRC teams can become lifelines for both their members and the wider community. Whether through organizing recovery efforts, offering emotional support, or leading initiatives, teams can turn adversity into an opportunity for growth and unity.

While physical damage from hurricanes can be repaired, losing a community has a lasting emotional toll. For those affected, the loss of support systems and familiar routines can be disorienting. In the FRC community, the team often acts as an emotional anchor, providing structure, purpose, and a sense of belonging.

It's important to acknowledge the emotional impact of losing a community. Students, mentors, and families may feel grief or disconnection, but this is where the strength of the robotics community shines brightest. By focusing on maintaining connections and rebuilding together, teams can begin to heal.

Rebuilding a community isn't just about fixing physical structures; it's about reconnecting people. FRC teams, as innovators and problem-solvers, are uniquely equipped to lead in this space. Whether through virtual meetups or organizing relief efforts, teams can help rebuild the sense of belonging that may have been lost.

FIRST teams understand that the true power of community lies in the relationships we foster. Even in the face of disaster, these bonds endure, helping us rebuild stronger and more united than before.

Belonging and community spirit are essential, especially in times of crisis. As FRC teams, we have the power to rebuild, reconnect, and show that no matter the challenges we face, we rise together. Let's continue to create spaces where everyone feels they belong, demonstrating the strength of our unity in the face of adversity.

How do you and your team make members, coaches and mentors feel they belong? Do you have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they really belong?

Send them to FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

From *FIRST*: Just in case you missed it! – DonorsChoose funding now available

Through the generous support from 3M, FIRST®-related DonorsChoose project funding is now available to any U.S.-based full-time educators and school district employees who work directly with students at least 75% of the time from Public Schools, Public Charter Schools, Head Start Centers, and Bureau of Indian Education Schools.

FIRST Educators will create a project on DonorsChoose. Once the project is live, they must complete a DonorsChoose form to be considered for this selective funding opportunity.

Projects will be reviewed to ensure they meet donor intent and partial funding will be allocated accordingly. Equity Focus Projects will be prioritized as part of 3M's commitment to reach 5 million underserved and underrepresented students by 2025.

More information here - [DonorsChoose funding now available](#)

October Holidays and Events:

Global Diversity Awareness Month, a month to celebrate and increase awareness about the diversity of cultures and ethnicities as well as the positive impact diversity can have on society.

LGBTQ+ History Month is a US observance that started in 1994 to recognize lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history and the history of the gay rights movement.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month was launched in 1945 when Congress declared the first week in October as "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1998, the week was extended to a month and renamed. The annual event draws attention to employment barriers that still need to be addressed.

October 3 to October 11: Navratri is the nine-day Hindu festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil.

October 4: St. Francis Day is a feast day for St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals and the environment. It's celebrated by many Catholic denominations.

October 10: World Mental Health Day was first celebrated in 1993 to increase public awareness about the importance of mental health, mental health services, and mental health workers worldwide.

October 11: National Coming Out Day is recognized in the United States to celebrate those who come out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.

October 11 (several minutes before sunset) to October 12 (after nightfall): Yom Kippur is the holiest day on the Jewish calendar. This day of atonement is marked by fasting and ceremonial repentance.

October 14: For Canadian Thanksgiving people give thanks for a good harvest & other fortunes in the past year.

October 16: International Pronouns Day seeks to make respecting, sharing, and educating about personal pronouns commonplace. Each year it is held on the third Wednesday of October.

October 20: Sikh Holy Day is the day Sikhs celebrate Sri Guru Granth Sahib, their spiritual guide.

October 23 (sunset) to October 24 (sunset): Shemini Atzeret is a Jewish holiday also known as The Eighth (Day) of Assembly.

October 24 (sunset) to October 25 (after night fall): Simchat Torah is a Jewish holiday that marks the end of the weekly readings of the Torah.

October 31: All Hallows' Eve, or Halloween, is a celebration observed in a number of countries on the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day. Halloween celebration origins are traced back to Samhain.

October 31 (sunset) to November 1 (sunset): Samhain is a Gaelic and Wiccan festival marking the beginning of winter.

If you spot an error in the newsletter please email us at: FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: Doyenne Inspiration West Awardee

Here is what was said about the *Doyenne Inspiration West* Awardee:

Throughout her team's history this mentor has been the one constant.

This mentor's team was founded in 2018 with 10 enthusiastic boys. After that season, this mentor sought to rally additional mentors and students from all backgrounds to diversify the team's collective knowledge, this now includes 35% of the team being girls.

During Covid, this mentor's words of encouragement and never-ending attempts to find outreach opportunities held the team upright.

Trying to reach all women in the community, this mentors' nurturing heart and creativity led her to coordinate a non-profit FLL camp for children at a women's abuse shelter. Putting together a STEM box that the shelter could keep for future kids to play with at the safe house.

This mentor's impact on her team is immeasurable. Whether it's sharing the joys of robotics, raising funds to support less fortunate students, or recruiting new teammates, she never fails to embrace every team member with kindness. Her support extends beyond the team, helping them navigate mental, emotional, and financial struggles. Without her Iced Java would be cold and lifeless.

Join us in congratulating **Zahira Fuentes FRC 6894 Iced Java - Doyenne Inspiration West Awardee**

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training: *From the UCLA Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion*

The final video in the Implicit Bias Video Series from BruinX, the R&D unit within UCLA's Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. This video discusses three primary strategies for countering implicit bias: (1) mindset; (2) debiasing; (3) decoupling.

Click here to view: [Implicit Bias | Lesson 6: Countermeasures](#)

The *FIRST* NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com

We are a team of coaches/mentors who want to help create a community and culture of people who embrace the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, who want to develop themselves, and who understand that growth and diversity of all types lead to team excellence.

Anisha Patel (she/her) - The Pitt Pirates 2642

Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196

All Editions are Available Online at: <https://www.firstnorthcarolina.org/belonging-newsletter>