

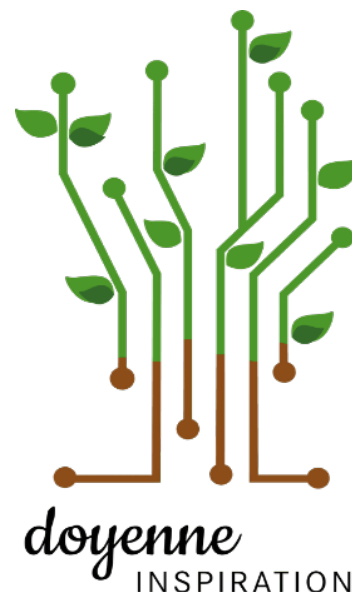
Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team

November 2023 – Special Edition

DOYENNE INSPIRATION

Doyenne Inspiration, an off-season event created for women and non-binary FIRST students, provides a sense of community and belonging through a gracious game. Interest in this competition has increased, jumping from 17 to 28 teams this past year alone and making it possible for a second Doyenne Inspiration event, Doyenne West (Team 2642). The Doyenne Inspiration event allows teams to do exactly what it says in the name: Inspire (Team 900).



A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

The event enabled our members to try different roles in the team, and it also allowed our team to bond in a way that only happens at competitions. We were inspired to go because of the educational, social, and experience-based learning it provided (Team 900).

We took this as an opportunity to train the girls for in-season competitions. We also learned “how important it is to work as a team” (Team 8738).

Carson F. from team 2642 shared that Doyenne reminds her of how much she loves to be hands-on with the robot and how this event can break the boundaries of STEM and the underrepresentation of women in STEM specifically.

CREATING AN IMPACT

By participating in the Doyenne Inspiration event, we showed new members that *FIRST* means community and support for everyone, not only those who fit the standard idea of an engineer (Team 900).

Team 4795, Eastbots also shared that “Doyenne created an environment that specifically encourages girls to take charge in a discipline that is so male-dominated, and it’s incredibly empowering.” Team Slice (8738) seconded this statement by saying that “the whole experience helped our Doyenne team to feel empowered and valued.”

BRINGING TEAMS TOGETHER

Team 3196, SPORK, shared their thoughts on the event by stating they thought it would be a great opportunity for the girls on their team to bond and work together. SPORK team members found that the group worked well together and could accomplish things that they previously thought were impossible.

Doyenne gave their girls a chance to bond and everyone who attended got to know one another better. Winning also gave them more confidence because they were able to see that they could contribute and be just as successful as male or veteran peers.

Lastly, team SPORK shared that “In a world where STEM is still a male-dominated field, it can be hard for us to feel seen at times. Since Doyenne Inspiration, our female members are much more active during meetings, and we have

been accomplishing more within a shorter time frame.” This was the teams first appearance at a Doyenne competition.

LET’S HEAR FROM THE STUDENTS:

“The atmosphere at Doyenne felt more cooperative and I felt like there was a greater sense of community. I’m looking forward to going again next year!” **Mercy S. Team 4290**

“Doyenne is what inspired me to switch from programming subgroup to engineering last year and has helped me feel empowered in the decision.” **Saline K. Team 2642**

Mae S. from team **8738** shared that she learned a lot through the event, making it a great learning experience. “Throughout the experience, our Doyenne team learned a lot about our robot and how competitions operate”.

“Doyenne shows representation of many diverse groups in *FIRST* and was incredibly inspirational. Doyenne represents hope for the future of *FIRST* and growing its impact even more.” **Dakota C. Team 2642**

“It was really fun to be inclusive,” and not only that but that “girls can do anything that boys can do.” **Caroline K. Team 8738**

“The community was great, and it was nice to see the diversity within the teams. It was also great to see the underrepresented part of *FIRST*, come together, and be their best selves.” **Mihika K. Team 4290**

“It was fun to see everyone participating and I really enjoyed the 2v2 competition structure. We saw a lot of teams coming together to support others, even if we were on other teams.” **Becca C. Team 4290**

All information and quotes provided by the following teams, click their number to read their full articles: [900](#), [2642](#), [3196](#), [4290](#), [4795](#) and [8738](#). Thank you all for your support and inspiration!

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight:

Doyenne Inspiration West - Keynote Speaker: Brianna Natale, VP of R&D at Husqvarna.

I’d like to start by saying thank you. It is an honor to be in the presence of such talented and competitive young adults that are blazing the trail for STEM present and future.

Adversity is what we all experience and even with my 15 years of professional experience, it’s been a lifelong journey of overcoming challenges.

I remember my mother and I, as a child, were making chocolate chip cookies. I remember mixing the cookies and wondering “how can I get an even distribution of chocolate chips for the perfect cookie?” I knew then that it would be a lifelong journey for me and the STEMs. When considering chocolate chip cookies, I want you to consider challenges as the essential ingredient to success.

Now let’s just debunk that myth of overnight success. You’ve probably seen many established professionals that you think have a natural ability to do what they do. They don’t have to work hard, and it just comes naturally, but what you don’t see is the behind the scenes struggles. You don’t see them up all night, the self-doubt, the rewriting of a paper, the nursing of a sick child; what you don’t see is the hard work that comes as a part of the journey.

When encountering adversity, I want you to think about what I call the three A’s.

Acknowledge- that you have a challenge. You can’t face a challenge you don’t know exists.

Assess- what your next steps are and assess the situation and who you can go to that you truly trust to give you honest advice. I come back to what I consider foundation every time I deal with a challenge or an issue. Foundation for me is faith, family, and friends. I’ve had many mentors in my past that I’ve really relied on for honest feedback.

Act- you have to act on your next step, action is the only way forward. Acting in spite of fear means you build fortitude. It could be revising your approach or being willing to change your mind. It could be taking a whole other path, but you have to act.

Now let's talk about resilience. Resilience is like a muscle, when you exercise it, it gets stronger. All those setbacks and mishaps are what I like to consider resilience building exercises. They build strength to help you face future challenges and without resilience, you can't continue to progress.

Lastly, I want you to flip the narrative. Flip the narrative that adversity is an obstacle because it's actually an opportunity. It's an opportunity to grow, learn, serve, and demonstrate your strength.

As you engage in this event, I want you to remember adversity is a natural part of the journey to success. Face challenges head on. There is no other way through. You have to get uncomfortable before you can build resilience and fortitude and looking at the remarkable young adults that I see in this room, I have zero doubt that you will handle them brilliantly.

Thank you.

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 - The Pitt Pirates 2642
Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196

Linda Whipker (she/her) - Team PyroTech 3459
Melissa "Bee" Bube (they/she) - Girls on Fire 5679

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