Belonging
the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – April 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.

Assume That I Can!

[World Down Syndrome Day](#) was on March 21st. It has been recognized by the United Nations since 2012, and focuses specifically on ending stereotypes around Down syndrome. Down syndrome has been part of the human condition across the globe and is the result of an individual having an extra partial or whole copy of chromosome 21. About 3,000-5,000 people are born with Down syndrome every year. Down syndrome often results in a variety of effects on learning styles and physical characteristics.

Stereotypes of people with Down syndrome and intellectual disability can lead to them being treated like children (regardless of their age), to them being excluded from activities, and to them being underestimated. Each year World Down Syndrome Day is an additional opportunity to change stereotypes and some people's assumptions about people with Down syndrome.

Part of being a *FIRST* Robotics Competition team is realizing the potential of all team members, including team members with intellectual disability. Sometimes we can limit ourselves or others by assuming what we can or can't do, whether due to a person's gender, financial circumstances, disability, or something else. The (United States) National Down Syndrome Society and Coordown recently highlighted the idea of "assume that I can" so that maybe I can, and were covered by CBS: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/world-down-syndrome-day-2024-viral-campaign/ — check it out and consider what assumptions you can change about yourself and others. Do you assume you can't be good at math, or can't use a drill, or can't be on the drive team? Let's all assume we all can so that maybe we can!

Don't allow a disability to define your abilities!

Do *you* have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they belong?

Send them to FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com or use this [GOOGLE FORM](#) and we'll include them in upcoming newsletters.

From *FIRST:* **Just in case you missed it!** – Happy Birthday to *FIRST!*

In 1989, in a room in a building in New Hampshire, a form was signed, and an idea was born!

   Read more here: [Happy Birthday to FIRST!](#)

April Holidays and Events:

April is Celebrate Diversity Month, a celebration initiated in 2004 to recognize and honor the diversity surrounding us all. By celebrating differences and similarities during this month, organizers hope that people will gain a deeper understanding of each other.

April 1-2: Passover (Jewish) - Commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt.

April 1-8: Sikh Vaisakhi (Khalsa) - Celebrates the formation of Khalsa Panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

April 2: World Autism Awareness Day - Raises awareness about people with autism and promotes inclusion and acceptance.

April 7: World Health Day - Global health awareness day to highlight a priority area of concern for the World Health Organization.

April 7: International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda - Commemorates the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994.

April 10: Palm Sunday (Christian) - Celebrates Jesus's entry into Jerusalem before his crucifixion and marks the beginning of Holy Week.

April 11-18: Passover (Jewish) - Continuation of the commemoration of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt.

April 13: Baisakhi/Vaisakhi (Sikh) - Celebrates the founding of the Khalsa community in Sikhism and the Sikh New Year.

April 15: Black Day (South Korea) - Day for singles to celebrate being single, contrasting the romantic holidays of Valentine's Day and White Day.

April 21: Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) (Jewish) - Commemorates the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

April 22: Earth Day - Global event to demonstrate support for environmental protection.

April 24: Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day - Commemorates the victims of the Armenian Genocide that occurred in the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

April 28: International Workers' Memorial Day - Honors workers who have died or been injured in the workplace and promotes safe and healthy work environments.

April 28: Day of Mourning (Canada) - Recognizes workers who have been killed, injured, or suffered illness due to workplace-related hazards and incidents.

Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: Avanti Ramraj *FIRST* Alum - *FIRST* made me a passionate STEM ambassador.

As a then-high school senior, *FIRST* ® alum Avanti Ramraj delivered a TEDx Talk about the use of gamification and role models as a means of overcoming stereotypes to diversify STEM. Her talk's title, "There's a Brown Girl in the Ring," was inspired by a song based on a children's game played in the West Indies where each child takes turns leading while the others imitate.

Read more here: Avanti Ramraj - STEM Ambassador

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Training: *Establishing an Allies/Safe Zone Program*

In partnership with *FIRST*, from the HRC Foundation:

In recent years we [HRC] have seen more and more LGBTQ+ Ally organizations strive to make the culture of a campus or workplace more aware and accepting of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer individuals.

Find out more - **Click here to view: Establishing an Allies/Safe Zone Program**

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	*Linda Whipker (she/her) - Team PyroTech 3459*
Dave Lashley (he/him) - Team SPORK 3196	*Melissa "Bee" Bube (they/she) - Girls on Fire 5679*

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