

Community Networking for FIRST Teams in 6 Easy Steps



**Helping make FIRST robotics a
Community Priority and Developing
Supportive Team Resources**

By Theresa Willingham
Coach, [FTC Team Duct Tape](#), Odessa, FL
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FIRST things FIRST: **FIRST Vision & Mission**

Vision

“To transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes.”

Dean Kamen, Founder

Mission

To inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in **exciting mentor-based programs** that build science, engineering, and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership.

Taking Vision and Mission to Heart...





Taking *Teamwork* into the Community

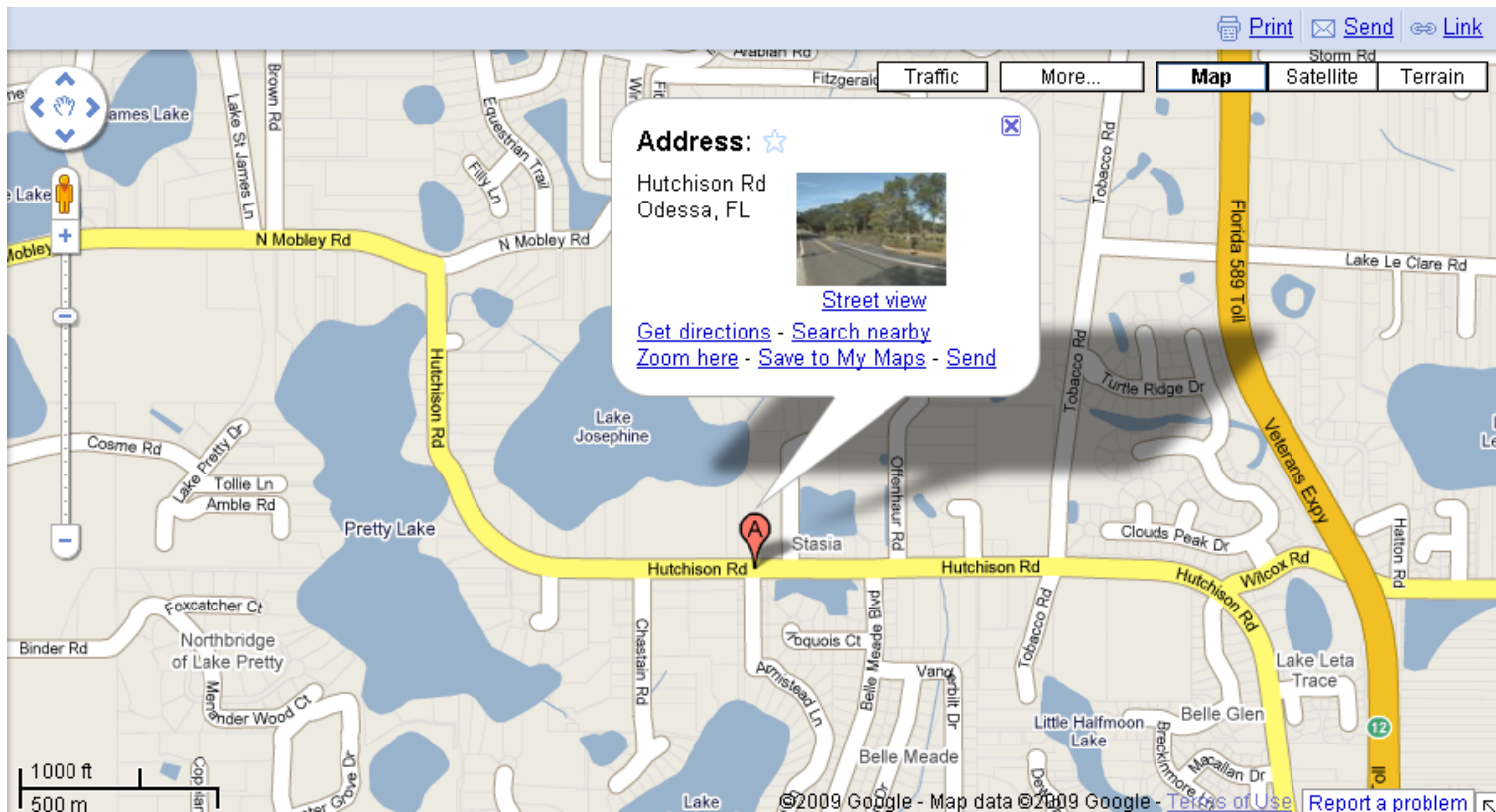


The beauty of FIRST robotics is that it's all about *teamwork*. That includes learning how to build your team of coaches, mentors and supporters.



Step 1: Take Stock

Google Your Neighborhood!





Taking Stock cont'd

Search for:

- ***Universities, colleges and technical or vocational schools*** that might have an engineering component.
- ***Nearby businesses*** that might be able to provide funding or sponsorship, even if they aren't engineering or robotics related. T-shirt companies and printers can make very helpful friends and supporters.
- ***Local chapters of professional groups*** like the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Society of Manufacturing Engineers, retired engineers groups or software user groups.
- ***Materials suppliers***

Taking Stock cont'd

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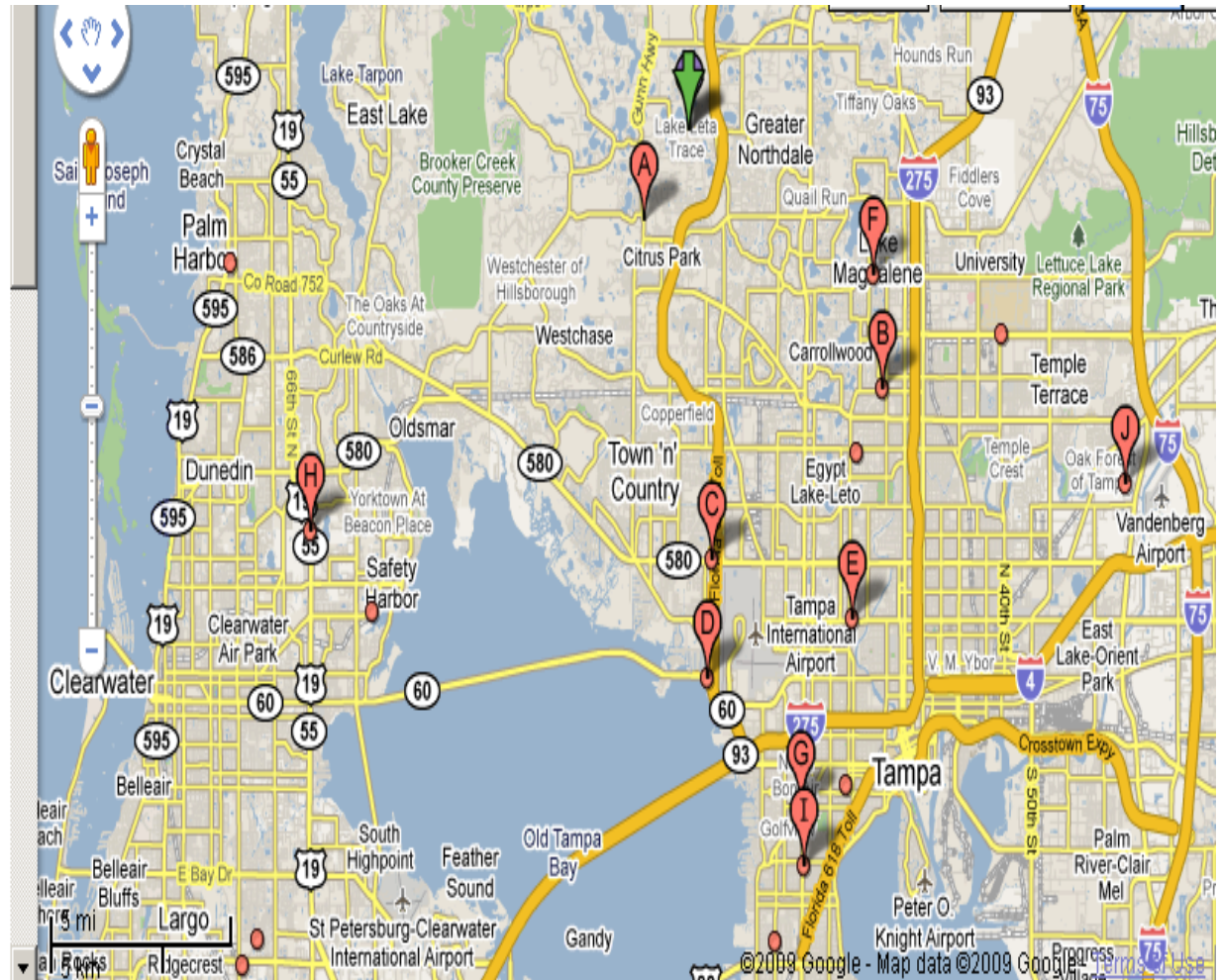
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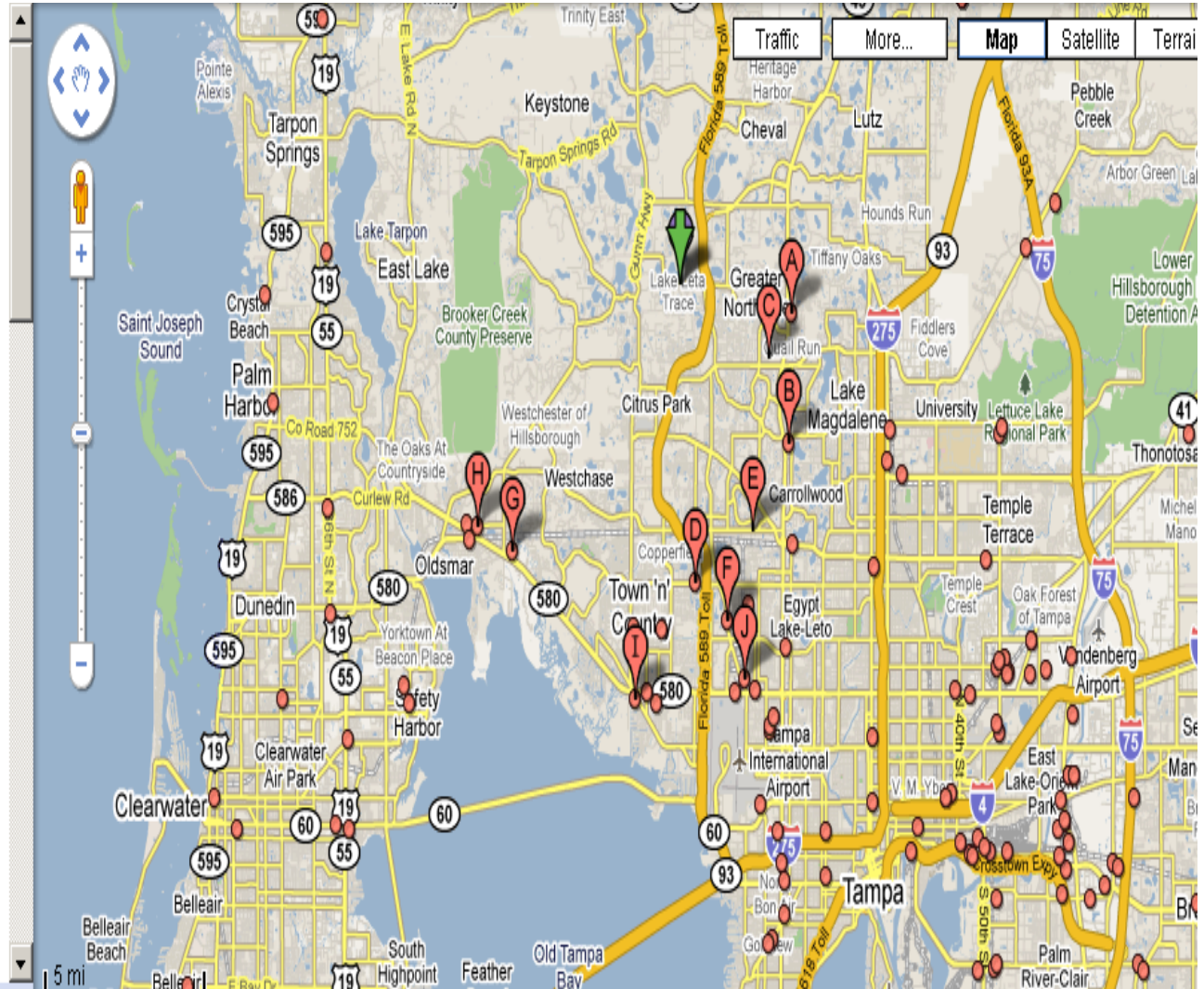
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Take Stock cont'd

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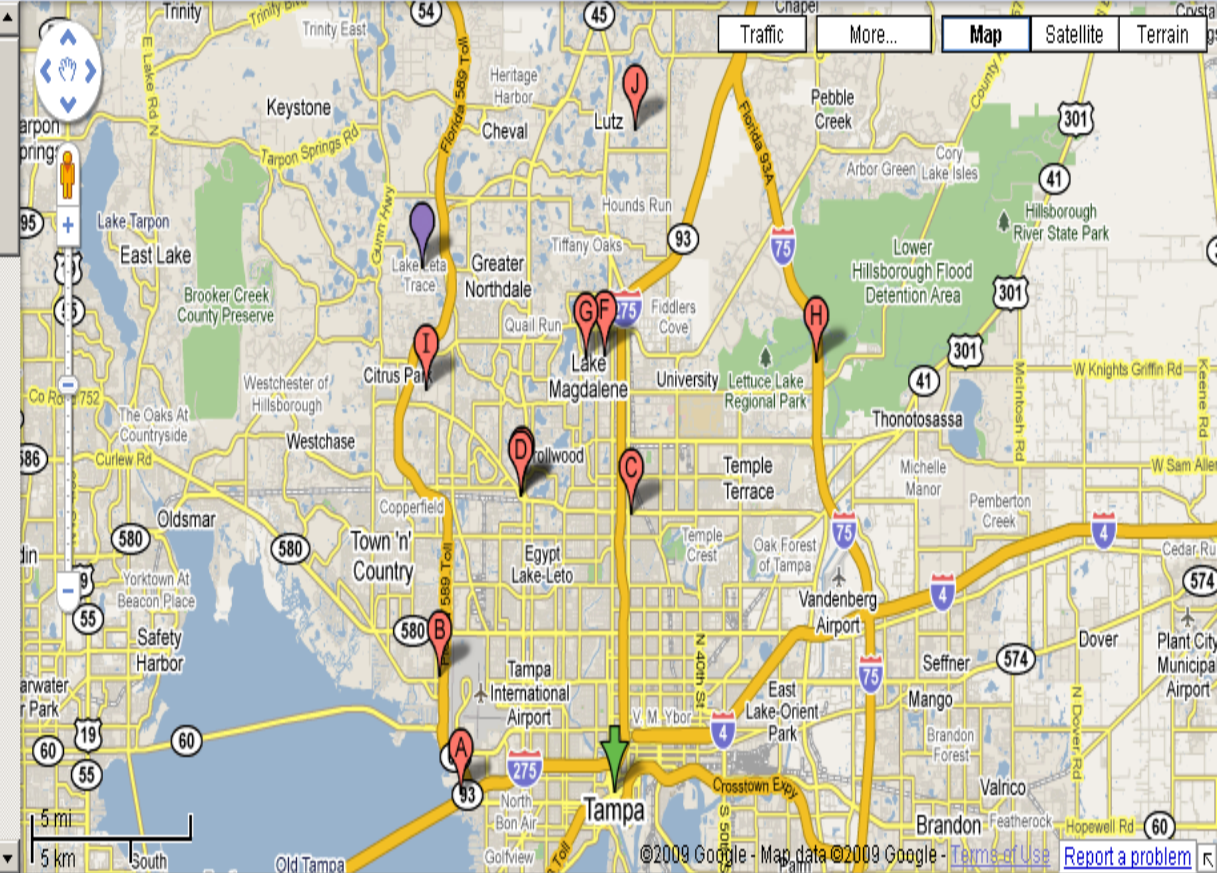
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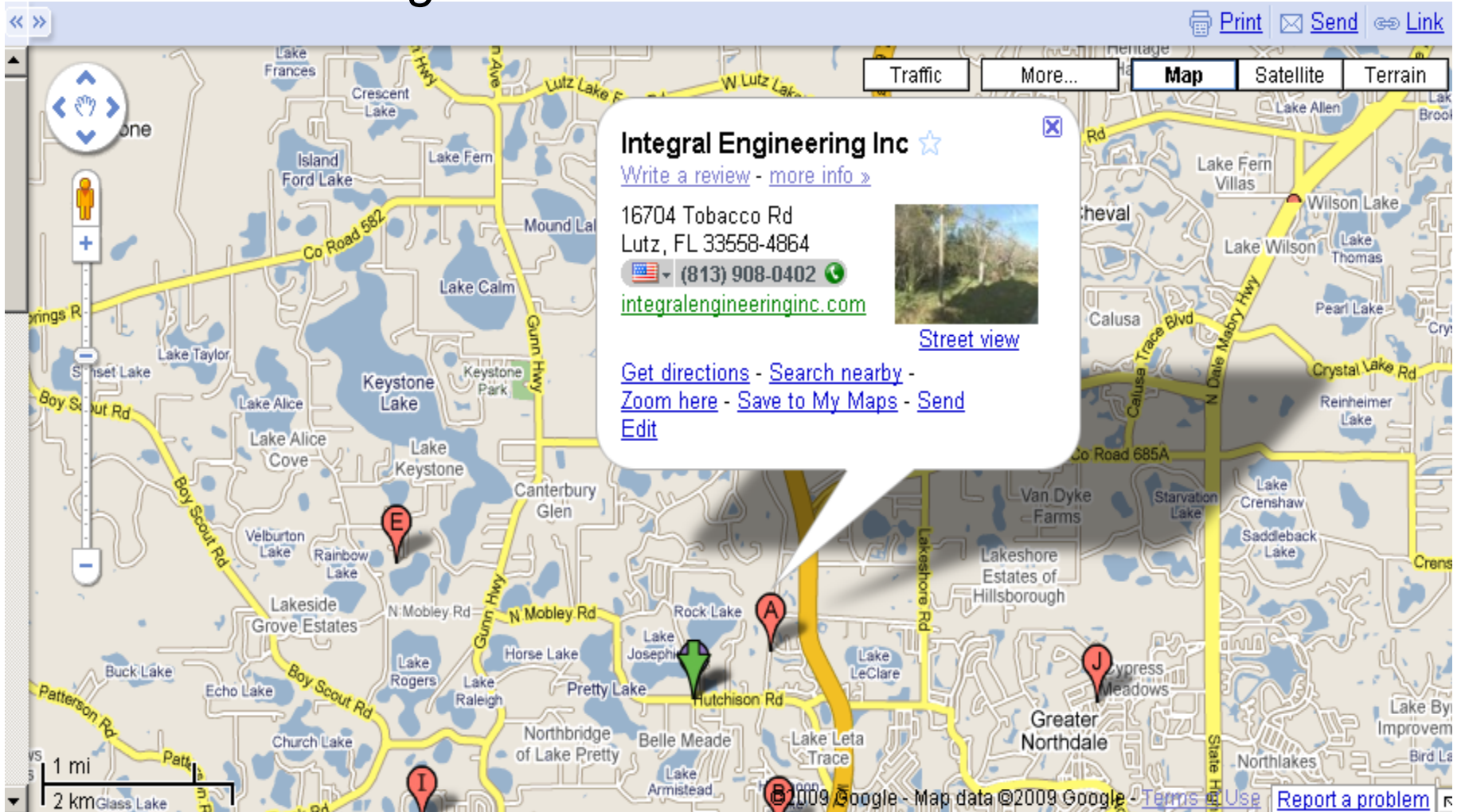
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Taking Stock cont'd

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Step 2: Market Your Team

After creating a **list of potential supporters**, market your team via:

- A **website** – blogspot is free and easy to maintain
- **Social Networking resources** – Twitter, Facebook, etc.
- **Information sheets** that are visually attractive and easy to read, about:
 - Your team,
 - Your needs
 - FIRST robotics (visit www.usfirst.org for printable resources)
- **Press releases** announcing events and competition appearances.

Step 3: Be Clear about Needs

But open to all types of help!

Opening businesses or research facilities up to team field trips

- Tutoring or mentoring help in any of a number of fields, ranging from computer programming, to building and design, general robotics instruction, team presentations

- Coaching support

- Team sponsorship

- Donations for registration, kit or competition fees

- Materials support





Step 4: Make Introductions

Send a note of introduction that includes:

- Photo of team
- Exactly what you're looking for: mentors, money, space, materials
- Your team packet with interesting team and FIRST robotics information



DEEP RUN HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS

Team 1086 - **Blue Cheese**

4801 Twin Hickory Road • Glen Allen, VA 23059-2519 • (804) 364-8000

Please Support Deep Run High School's Robotics Team



The Deep Run High Schools Robotics Team is seeking supporters and tax deductible donations. Our team, Blue Cheese Robotics, participates in the international *FIRST* Robotics Competition. The vision of this competition as expressed by Dean Kamen, Founder is *"To transform our culture by creating a world where science and technology are celebrated and where young people dream of becoming science and technology heroes."*

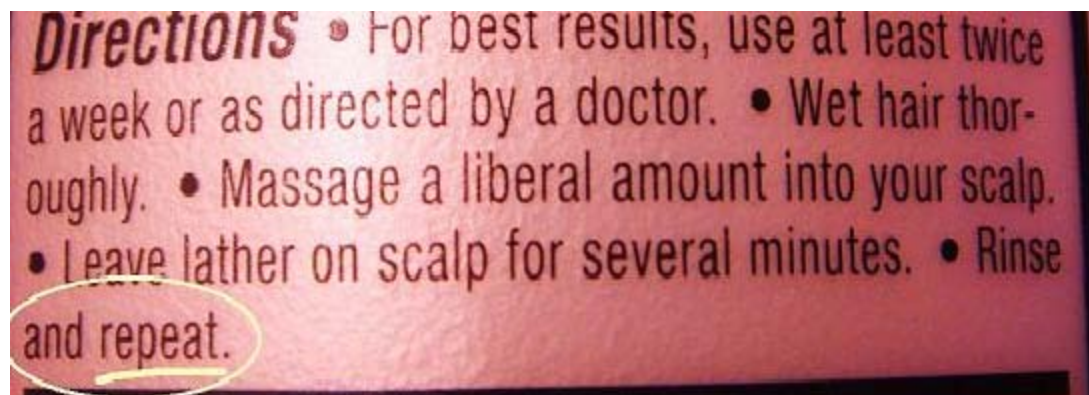
Teams participate in *FIRST* from all 50 states, as well as 12 Canadian provinces and six other countries. Each year, *FIRST* provides teams with a new challenge to solve and students work with professional mentors to design and build a robot to complete their task. *FIRST* designs exciting competitions where robots compete with and against one another in a sports-like atmosphere.



Step 5: Follow Up!

Wait a couple of weeks and then follow up with a second letter, email or phone call.

Rinse and Repeat as needed.





Step 6: Be Gracious!

- Be prompt, polite and profuse in your gratitude for any and all support you receive.
- Have students write or sign thank you notes with a team photo on them.
- Thank sponsors, donors and mentors on your team website, list supporters on team shirts, in team literature and on your robot, if possible.
- Update sponsors, mentors and supporters regularly and mention them regularly to others.
- Visit your supporters & stay in touch!



*Gratitude goes a long way towards encouraging others to support you, too – and it's a great message to get across to youth, that being nice, polite, kind, gracious and grateful – in short, exhibiting **Gracious Professionalism** – nets you more -- and more enduring --support.*



Networking Resources

FIRST – Mentors and Coaches resources:

<http://usfirst.org/roboticsprograms/coachesmentors/default.aspx>

Sharing FIRST: <http://www.sharingfirst.org>

Non-Engineering Mentor Organization (NEMO):

<http://www.firstnemo.org/finding.htm>

Community Networking Resources:

<http://www.scn.org/commnet/resources.html>

The Good Neighbors Guide to Community Networking: <http://lone-eagles.com/cnguide.htm>

Marketing 101: Using Social Media/Web 2.0 to Highlight Your Program:

http://www.servicelearning.org/instant_info/marketing_101/index.php

Writing a Press Release: <http://www.cpcwnc.org/Toolbox/tbpress.html>