

## Who are we?

We are Up Next!, FIRST Robotics Team #3528, and we are so excited to be here! Up Next! is an FRC team composed primarily of homeschoolers. There are over two million homeschoolers in the United States and that number continues to grow. In fact, it is the fastest growing form of education. Because of the expense and expertise required for a robotics team, this population is greatly underserved.

2011 marked the rookie season for Team Up Next! We learned and grew in our understanding of FIRST Robotics and had a really fun time doing it. However, our roots actually date back to 2009, when the Fritts family moved to the Kansas City area and realized there were very few STEM opportunities available within the homeschool community. Having already coached FIRST teams in Michigan, they decided to start an FLL team to serve the homeschool community. After the first year, the decision was made to form an FRC team.

Throughout our rookie year, an idea was forming in the minds of our mentors. Their idea was to broaden Up Next! and make it reach even more homeschoolers, helping them to learn more about STEM through programs such as FRC, FTC, and FLL. The Up Next! Leadership Foundation is designed to be a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation formed to fund Team Up Next! and eventually more FIRST teams. We hope to be able to someday provide scholarships for our alumni as well as providing valuable STEM education to homeschoolers in our community. And so the fall of 2011 brought about the Up Next! Leadership Foundation.

## How are we being a role model for other FIRST teams?

We put a lot of energy into teaching leadership skills. Because we have such a small team, almost everyone has some type of leadership position. At the 2011 Kansas City regional, our team captain, Logan Fritts, was announced as a Dean's List Finalist because of his excellent leadership capabilities.

The Christmas of 2011, our team helped package and load for transport over 10,000 Christmas boxes for children in foreign countries. This allowed us to impact people beyond our community and into far away countries.

Up Next! is blessed to have so many diverse people from different histories and skill sets. Our team is comprised of 31% girls - 50% of which are in leadership positions. We are also made up of students from five different cities around the Kansas City Metro area ranging in ages from 13-18.

## How are we spreading excitement and impacting our community?

Throughout the year, Up Next! participated in many different events. At Cow Town ThrowDown, a Kansas City invitational event, we were excited to have the opportunity to help with set up, calling teams, timing, announcing, videotaping, and clean up. Because of our involvement this past year we were asked to co-host this event next year.

Up Next! is privileged to be mentoring FRC team #3973, the Platte City Pirates out of Platte City,

Missouri, and FRC team # 3937, the Wildcat Robotics Team "Breakaway", out of Harding University in Searcy, Arkansas. We were also able to assist local team #1737 when they needed some last minute help with programming and controls.

Last year, we also mentored our own FLL team who went on to win their state competition and the third place Research Project Award at the FIRST Championship. This year we welcomed one of the FLL members onto our FRC team.

Up Next! was happy to participate in the FLL Food Factor regional and state competitions. We were able to help with timing, queuing, and judging - impacting over 80 FLL teams.

We co-hosted the 2012 FRC Quick Build, helping other teams check in their Kit of Parts. A few of the teams didn't have enough team members with them, so our students volunteered to help them complete the workshops and thus complete construction of their initial robot. This was a great opportunity for us to make new friends and encourage Coopertition?.

Team Up Next! greatly enjoys being deeply involved with FIRST events and other FIRST teams and we plan to continue this part of our outreach throughout the coming years.

## **How are we spreading the FIRST message?**

Community outreach is foremost in the hearts and minds of Up Next! We are honored to excite and encourage today's youth through STEM opportunities. For this reason, Up Next! started a program called 'UpWard Outreach,' which has been involved with over 13 community outreach programs in the past two years. In the fall of 2010, we did a dual presentation with our FLL namesake team at Independence Mall. We were able to demonstrate our robots and explain the vision of FIRST. The kids loved it!

In June of 2011, our team traveled to Kansas to promote FIRST at a Catholic homeschool convention. There we teamed up with a professor from Benedictine College and helped the students program their robots in the workshops. We were also able to demonstrate our robot, talk about the programs FIRST offers, and encourage students to become involved.

Later that summer, we joined with three other FRC teams at the Makers Faire held at Union Station in Kansas City, Missouri. The Makers Faire is designed to demonstrate and promote ideas in technology. We demonstrated our robot and held a friendly match with the other teams. This was a great opportunity to bond with our fellow FRC teams and to promote FIRST.

At the Liberty Fall Festival, which attracts over 10,000 people annually, we were privileged to set up a booth and bring our robot. We personally spoke with hundreds of people telling them about FIRST while successfully fundraising through FIRST green e-watt saver light bulb sales.

On Halloween 2011, we helped with a Trunk or Treat event at a local church. Many excited kids from the community showed up for the event. We took this opportunity to demonstrate our robot and tell the audience that FIRST is science and math in action, and it is exciting! The kids got to drive the robot and we got to watch their faces light up.

We are excited to be involved with our local 4-H clubs. The members of the 4-Corners 4-H club invited us to come and tell them about FIRST and our robot. One of our mentors and a few of our students are starting a county-wide 4-H project where we will teach kids about robotics while promoting FIRST and

STEM.

Another way that we are able to communicate FIRST to the community is through our various media outlets. We are very excited that our YouTube channel has grown as large as it has. We upload a new video once or twice a week during build season and often during the off season. We also update our Facebook page frequently. We now have around 50 active monthly users and over 800 post views. Contacting our team is easy via our new and improved website.

K-LOVE, a local radio station, will be attending our 2012 sponsor appreciation night. They will be interviewing the students and will broadcast the message of FIRST on their website and on the air.

## How strong are our team partnerships?

Our sponsors have been instrumental in getting our team and Foundation started. NASA Marshall Space Flight Center, Metropolitan Community College, jcpenny, Imaging for Women LLC, The KC STEM Alliance, ScriptPro, Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary 8915, Perceptive Software, Cerner, Laird Plastics, and Stephen M. Connelly, CPA, PC have all helped us get off the ground. We like to really get to know our sponsors, and welcome them to be involved in the build and competition process. Last year we started the tradition of inviting all of our sponsors to a Sponsor Appreciation Night. On this night, we play a slideshow that shows pictures and video of our build season and our competition experience, students are given the opportunity to speak and express their appreciation, and each representative is given a gift of appreciation. Some of our sponsors have asked us to be involved in their events as well. For example, last year, Metropolitan Community College Business and Technology Center asked us to lead their graduation procession. Our robot was given the privilege of leading the graduates down the aisle and as they processed out. This was a proud moment for our team, and an opportunity for the college to demonstrate their commitment to the next generation of students.

Another of our sponsors, jcpenny, allowed us to come and fundraise at their store while spreading the word of FIRST in the community. We also helped another sponsor by being at the Knights of Columbus Ladies Auxiliary craft show. Here, we were able to help one of our sponsors and spread the word of FIRST by having a booth for this purpose.

We have a very strong relationship with our mentors. Many of them are parents, siblings, and grandparents of the students. We greatly appreciate all of the time, effort, and dedication our mentors have put into the last two years. We even threw our head mentor, Jeff Ousley, a party the week before Bag and Tag. We realized how much time and energy he had put into the team and we wanted to show him how grateful we are for all he has done for us.

Though we are a 2nd year team, we are having a positive impact on our students and our community. FIRST has influenced each of us in many ways. The competition is great but it is the life skills we've learned that are going to stick with us for the rest of our lives - brainstorming prototyping, public speaking, Gracious Professionalism?, and Coopertition?, just to name a few. Our Dean's List Finalist graduated and received a FIRST scholarship, and credits FIRST for helping him get the first job he ever applied for. He said of the job interview, "Every time they asked me a question, I could think of an experience I had in FIRST that provided me a great answer." FIRST provides a hands-on experience for young people in a way that nothing else can. Each of us is grateful for the opportunities and abilities FIRST has given us. So with this in mind, FIRST Team 3528 Up Next! is here, and very ready to compete. So keep your eyes and ears open for TEAM UP NEXT!