



December 21, 2018

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Your student has chosen to be a part of the FIRST Robotics Team at the Allendale High School. We would like to take a minute to give you a little background on the program, and let you know what to expect in the upcoming months.

FIRST stands for "For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology," and was the brainchild of Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway, the Portable Dialysis Machine, the Wheelchair that climbs stairs and stands upright and the Luke Arm (among many other inventions). His idea was to give high school students the opportunity to be as inspired about science and technology as they were about sports. He wanted them to have the opportunity to look up to engineers and scientists the same way that they looked up to baseball and basketball players.

FIRST is based around a 6-week design and build session, in which teams are given a kit of parts and a game like task to perform. This year it starts on January 5th and, with competitions, could span as far as the end of April. At the end of the six weeks, all work stops and the robot must be bagged. Once the robot is bagged teams can compete in District competitions in Michigan (and all over the United States as well as around the world). Each competition presents the opportunity to qualify for the State Championship and then the FIRST Championship East through winning awards and/or the event. The preseason time is used for learning the necessary skills, teambuilding and fundraising which makes this a year-round program with optional opportunities.

We have many companies that are proud to be sponsoring the team at Allendale High School, and we have several Engineers, Professionals, & Volunteers that are mentoring and supporting the program. While the team will be paying for registration and other team fees, Students are required to raise the money for their participation fee, which covers travel, uniforms, and more, through a variety of fundraisers or plain paying. The initial participation fee covers the District level events. Additional fees are required as the team progresses to the State Championship and World Championship events.

For the 2019 season, our team has elected to participate in two district competitions this year, in the hopes of qualifying for the Michigan State Competition. We are currently registered for District events in St. Joseph, MI and Allendale, MI.

All of this said, I can attest to how incredible this program will be for your student. Through FIRST, your student will not only learn about engineering, but teamwork, presentation, organization and many other valuable skills. The engineers will not only be mentors, but become friends and great contacts. Colleges around the U.S. now provide over 80 million dollars in scholarships to high school students involved in the program. Corporations are also looking at FIRST Alumni because of the skills and teamwork that they learn from the FIRST programs.

Feel free to contact me with any questions!

Sincerely,

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