



STEAM Comes First: Ford Provides STEAM Mentorship, Funding Leading Up to FIRST Championship

- Global robotics initiative – For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, or FIRST[®] – finds that just one in seven students remain interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics by the time they reach 12th grade; Ford aims to keep them involved through FIRST Robotics

- 200-plus Ford engineers and IT experts volunteer as FIRST Robotics mentors for 86 high school teams

- More than 30 Ford-sponsored robotics teams are competing this week in the prestigious FIRST Championship in Detroit

DEARBORN, Mich., April 25, 2018 – The Goon Squad, one of 86 teams Ford helps sponsor through For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST), is headed to the FIRST Championship in Detroit this week to pit its robot against others from around the world.

Ford supports FIRST Robotics teams across the country through its STEAM efforts. Ford STEAM Experience connects employees with students and the community through activities in science, technology, engineering, arts and math. Michigan has more participants than any other state this season – 500 teams. Just more than 100 Michigan teams will be in Detroit this week. Ford is involved in sponsoring nearly 30 percent of them.

Randy Strawsine, a Ford IT operations supervisor, joined FIRST Robotics as a mentor in 2011 when his son was on the Goon Squad and has been the team’s coach for the past six years. More than 200 Ford engineers and IT experts volunteer as mentors for more than 80 high school teams.

Under Strawsine’s supervision, the father-son duo continues to work to interest students in technology and engineering, which has led to four district wins, qualifying for six state championships and three world appearances for the Goon Squad.

“As mentors, we provide STEAM guidance for students to develop their technical skills,” says Strawsine. “Not only that, we help them develop personally by getting them to face adversity, deal with high-stress situations and communicate with a diverse group of teammates.”

According to FIRST, just one in seven students in the United States remain interested in STEM fields by the time they reach 12th grade. This comes as the need for STEM professionals is 1 million more than what the country is expected to produce from 2015 to 2025, according to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#). Ford is aiming to boost these numbers by getting more students involved with FIRST teams and competitions.

The most prominent of the FIRST competitions is this week's FIRST Robotics Competition – a global contest that gives high school teams six weeks to design and develop a robot. Teams face off head-to-head as their robots perform prescribed tasks that change from year to year.

“Ford is highly dedicated to promoting STEAM education through programs and initiatives around the world,” says Ken Washington, Ford vice president, research and advanced engineering, chief technology officer and the company's executive champion of STEAM. “FIRST Robotics is a key platform for STEAM opportunities – connecting Ford with bright students who are passionate about science and technology.”

Strawsine has seen students come and go through his involvement with the program, and he is grateful for the opportunity to watch them grow. He guided Maddie Hernandez a senior captain who handles her team's communications and media planning – through the process of presenting a proposal she created to the district superintendent and her high school principal. Maddie's proposal, which seeks to recruit more girls into STEAM activities, now has been approved.

Scott Hall captain of Goon Squad who drives the team's robot – has developed into a proven leader through FIRST Robotics. Scott not only grew his skills in technical areas including computer-aided design – he has gained more confidence and learned to manage competition stress thanks to his Ford mentors and coach.

“To see them find out something about themselves and have those ‘aha’ moments is one of the main reasons I continue coming back to coach,” says Strawsine.

About Ford Motor Company

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