

A Letter to New Parents:

Take a breath, you are NOT ALONE! This can be overwhelming at first but very quickly becomes second nature. This is just an overview of what robotics is all about from the perspective of some new parents who just went thru their first year. The best way to learn what is going on with Team 20 is to attend the group meetings with your student. This will allow you to get information first hand and to meet other parents who are in the same boat.

The first thing that you should know is that Robotics is divided into seasons: Pre-Build, Build, and Post- Build. During each phase different things happen. The Pre-Build season is where all of the planning for the year takes place. Kids will be exposed to various aspects of robotics, meet other students and get a feel for what's ahead during this time. Fundraising, which is a necessary part of any organization, takes place at this time as well. During the Pre-Build season, the students get a chance to participate in two competitions. River Rage, which is held in Manchester, NH, is a competition that uses the last year's robot; and the Vex competition is where students get to build robots on a smaller scale is the second competition. Pre-Build Season Team 20 meetings usually take place on Thursdays in the Tech Rooms at HSE from 7-9pm.

During the Build season, which starts with the kick off at RPI, sometime in January, is when the students get busy building the actual robot using the specifications designated by the US FIRST organization. US FIRST is a non-profit organization that inspires young people to be science and technology leaders by engaging them in mentor-based programs. This organization was founded by Dean Kamen and more information can be found at their web site (www.usfirst.org). It is during this time that your child has the opportunity to work every day with robotics, which is good because your student needs to log in 40 hours of work on the robot to attend the competitions. The kick off is a great place to get a feel for what the competitions are like. The enthusiasm is contagious and once you go to one, you want to go to them all! If you are a parent of a freshman, you are required to attend any overnight competitions that your student goes to. During the build season, students are encouraged to come to the tech rooms every evening, from 7-9pm and on the weekends from 10am-4pm. There is a full team meeting on Thursday evening that all students are expected to attend, this is when parents can go and learn quite a lot about what is happening with the group. A group of parents organize volunteers that prepare lunches for weekends during the build season. Don't worry if your student cannot go every day or even stay for the entire time when they go, as long as they log in 40 hours over the entire build season, they can attend competitions. And if they attend the kick off weekend, that's 13 hours right there.

Build season culminates with the competitions. There are regional competitions, we usually attend two based upon fundraising and then there is the Mack daddy of competitions, the World Championship which this year is being held in St. Louis, MO. Because Team 20 was one of the original teams of FIRST, they usually get an automatic invitation to Worlds. This may or may not be the case this year we do not know at press time. Competitions are really fun! The energy in the room will excite even the most quiet, laid back person. Regional competitions are held out of town and require an overnight stay, as they are multi day events. This is where you really get to know your fellow parents. At competitions, students are kept busy doing their respective jobs for the team. Some students will be working in the "pit", which is where the robot is kept and repaired if needed during the competition. Some students will be working for the scouting team, which assess the other teams' strengths and weaknesses and keeps track of statistics. Then there are those students who are responsible for the spirit of the team. This is where you can really help! We always welcome parents who are ready to stand up and shout as our team takes the field.

The Post Season consists of showing of the robot at different venues, participating in various events as Team 20 within the community and these events are determined by the board and the student leaders. This is a good time for students to be ambassadors of Team 20, and encourage others to join! Meetings during this season are scheduled as needed.

The finances for Team 20 are not as complicated as you might think. We get money from corporate sponsors, team fundraising as well as the initial fee each student is asked to pay. This goes toward the building of the robot and pre-build season competitions. For each Build season competition there is an additional fee asked of the students who will be attending those specific competitions. All monies are handled thru the non-profit group, "RUGRUNNER ROBOTICS INC." This is the non-profit group that was formed to help with financing Team 20. All checks should be made payable to this group. Anything above the initial student fee can be used as a tax deduction.

Team 20 is a well oiled machine that has many parts that are necessary to make it run. From the technical to the spirit-filled there is a place for everyone to help. Students and parents alike. If you have a special skill that makes you unique, we are sure that there is a spot for you on Team 20. Mentors are always welcome and need not be from a technical background. Many of the veteran parents and mentors will be happy to explain anything to you and welcome any help you can give.

Here are some tid-bits that will be helpful to you:

- Team website – www.team20.com
- US FIRST website – www.usfirst.org
- Twitter – Team20Robotics
- Facebook – will be invited to join the group
- A helpful forum – www.chiefdelphi.com

Important Dates:

- Fundraising packets go home – 10/18/12
- River Rage – Saturday, October 27, 2012. Bus leaves at 3:30am SHARP! Cost is \$50per person and is due 10/20
- VEX competition – December 8th, 2012
- 2013 Games Kick Off – Saturday, January 5, 2013 @ RPI
- WPI Regional in Worcester, Mass. – Friday & Saturday ,March 8-9, 2013. Cost: \$70 due 2/7/13
- Connecticut Regional in Hartford, CT – Friday & Saturday, March 29-30, 2013. Cost: \$70 due 2/7/13
- 2013 US FIRST World Championship in St. Louis, MO – Wednesday – Saturday, April 24-27, 2013. Cost: \$450 (\$225 due 1/2/13 and \$225 due 2/16/13).

We hope that this information is helpful to you. If you feel that you need more detailed information, please contact Rose Barra at (rose.barra@gmail.com). This group is a fun one to be a part of, not only as a student but also as a parent.

We look forward to meeting you!

Lisa Castaldo, Loretta Pieropan, Vaiva Sargunas

*Moms who survived the first year and are eagerly awaiting the next season!