

Title of Session: FIRST Robotics
Moderator: Robyn Needles and Patricia Chen
Title of File: 20060411robotics
Date: April 11, 2006

Room: Robotics (K-12) Group

MarieMS: Hey, does everyone know that Tiff got into the NASA Internship program for this summer?

RobynN: Michelle, do you know anything about FIRST yet?

RobynN: oh, that is so cool!

KristenK: oh, that is wonderful!

PatriciaCh: Michelle...please tell us a little about yourself

MichelleRM: Bj - I am not quite sure what FIRST Robotics is all about....I am required by one of my college classes to participate in 4 discussions in my content area - which is science.

RobynN: I like that class

PatriciaCh: okay....we can help you

RobynN: we are about science and more

PatriciaCh: the site is www.usfirst.org

MichelleRM: I am a pre-service teacher at University of Houston - I am graduating in 3 weeks. I will be certified in 4th-8th science and will begin teaching in August

PatriciaCh: and then we can fill in the rest....we are all from different teams

MarieMS: Lego League!

MichelleRM: I currently work at NASA while I go to college...

RobynN: I was just going to say that, Marie

RobynN: NASA is a big sponsor of FIRST

PatriciaCh: terrific....what do you do there?

MichelleRM: I work for a subcontractor in their corporate office - nothing really having to do with science...

SusanR joined the room.

BjB waves hi to Sue

RobynN: hello Susan

MarieMS: Hi Susan

PatriciaCh: okay....look at the website....all of us here are either mentors of FRC or FLL or both...some are involved with VEX

MarieMS: Pat - or JFLL!

SusanR: Greetings

PatriciaCh: hello...

RobynN: LEGO League is a program for elementary and middle school students - they have a challenge which changes each year, a tabletop game that uses programmed LEGO robots of the kids' design

PatriciaCh: Michelle....I am a teacher of 7th grade math....anytime you need help ...just ask

AmyHe joined the room.

RobynN: you know, Pat - I have found that most of the math I use regularly is what I learned in 7th grade

DebraP joined the room.

PatriciaCh: VEX is the bridge between FLL and FRC....kids built and program a robot...they too have challenges... it changes every year as well

RobynN: Hi Debra and Amy

AmyHe: Hello

DebraP: am I here?

PatriciaCh: Hello....we have a lot of new people...why don't we do intros

BjB smiles. Yes, Debra, if you wanted to be in the First Robotics discussion

DebraP: I am a Tech Coordinator in Paterson, NJ

RobynN: nice to see everyone here

SusanR: K to 8 Occasional Teacher from Canada

AmyHe: I'm a chemistry / physics teacher in Minnesota

JuliaSt joined the room.

RobynN: I am a NEM (non-engineering mentor) for a FIRST Robotics team in Baltimore - my hubby is one of the mechanical build mentors

JuliaSt: Hi everyone!

RobynN: Hi Julia! How's it going

MichelleRM: Cool....is it hard to be a part of First (maybe it is something that I would like to do with my students when I start teaching)

KristenK: I am a college student studying Mechanical Engineering--I work with FRC, FVC and FLL

KristenK: (more FLL and FVC these days than FRC though)

RobynN: it isn't that hard, Michelle, you can learn about it on the website that Marie gave you: www.usfirst.org

MichelleRM: so what do you do in this discussion?

PatriciaCh: we talk to teachers and people who are interested in this program

RobynN: FIRST's goal is to encourage students to pursue science and technology careers; we are also trying to provide a network for girls

DebraP: Yeah! Get those girls involved!

RobynN: FIRST was the brainchild of Dean Kamen, who invented the Segway and the iBot wheelchair

PatriciaCh: we are trying to encourage girls to stay in the program and pursue a career

RobynN: his idea was to make science and technology as much fun as sports

RobynN: Debra, we are all looking for ways to do that

MichelleRM . o O (the segway is cool)

PatriciaCh: the championship games will be webcast by NASA....at the end of this month...check it out

RobynN: www.robotics.nasa.gov

PatriciaCh: you type so fast

RobynN: Friday and Saturday the 28th and 29th

MichelleRM: how do you get funding for this kind of thing...I don't know if the school district that I am going to teach in would be willing to fund it

RobynN: lol

JuliaSt: it's a really exciting event- middle school and high school teams from all over the world compete in the 3 separate programs

RobynN: Pat, when I was in high school, my mom made me take typing....I hated it with a passion....but it's a skill I have used almost every day of my life

PatriciaCh: Houston has a regional....so there must be teams in the area...go to the website...to the map..you can locate the teams in TX

PatriciaCh: I took typing in junior high....my claim to fame..no two fingers typing

MichelleRM: that sounds cool.....I think the high school I went to did something like this....I think it was called the Mars Rover competition and there was also a robotics competition - it was sponsored by NASA JSC (Johnson Space Center)

RobynN: once you get involved, you will be hooked - our son started the team at his school when he was a senior in high school....he moved on and 4 years later we are still there

PatriciaCh: heed the advice...but it is rewarding

AmyHe: So can anyone tell me how was the challenge this year? (We did not participate formally this year in FLL, but held our own "in house" competitions with last years challenges and challenge sets.)

RobynN: Michelle, it sounds like your school may have had a FIRST team...the Rover competition was different. But....one of the guys who designs the game each year is NASA's executive in charge of solar system exploration, he put the rovers on Mars - and wears a tee shirt that says "My other car is STILL parked on Mars"

DebraP: Love that t-shirt

PatriciaCh: Amy...this year FLL was ocean odyssey.... environmental issues

RobynN: oh yeah, he wears that or Hawaiian loud print shirts

MichelleRM: lol

PatriciaCh: like a Floridian :}

RobynN: it's an inside joke, Michelle - when the last shuttle mission went up, the astronauts were all wearing Hawaiian shirts for their press conference....just like Dave's

MichelleRM: cool

RobynN: I haven't seen the FLL challenge this year, Amy, looking forward to it in Atlanta

PatriciaCh: Seriously....FIRST is also great for hooking kids to stay in school...

PatriciaCh: I show the game and my team matches to my middle schoolers

RobynN: that's for sure - their school subjects make sense because they use the knowledge in solving practical problems

PatriciaCh: the new challenge (FLL) nano technology....that was the hint

RobynN: and if you are not afraid to encourage them, kids come up with really creative ideas

RobynN: oh, I love nanotechnology - we will have to start a LL team this coming year

PatriciaCh: yes....even my lower level students...can relate to FRC

PatriciaCh: do you want to clue me in what it can be?

RobynN: I am hoping that we can take our FIRST robot to some of the elementary and middle schools in the area to create a buzz

PatriciaCh: yes...that is the way to do it

RobynN: Julia, I see that you got a room for the RCU meeting

AmyHe: I live in an area with few professional engineers or technologists - I have had high school kids mentor the 5th grade team - we didn't do so well competitively, but we had fun

RobynN: Amy, I think that's more important

RobynN: kids who have fun will keep going with science and math

PatriciaCh: That is key.....my two teams did not do as well.....but we can Spirit Award and had a ball.....

JuliaSt: yes, we did- we'll be in room C305 at 3:00 on Thursday, April 27 for anyone who'll be at the Championships!

RobynN: we won the Sportsmanship award for helping a rookie team that should have done well but had no real mentoring throughout the build season

PatriciaCh: I told the Kaylin from Mort (Team 11) to join us....MORT is planning a NJ Chapter

RobynN: Michelle - the high school teams have just 6 weeks to go from learning the game and getting their kit of basic parts to the day they have to ship a robot to a competition

PatriciaCh: They really gung ho!

RobynN: that's really great, Pat

DebraP: That sounds good for NJ, since I don't know anything about what you are talking about.

DebraP: I am reading the background information.

DebraP: My son is 16 and loves this kind of stuff. Maybe should have him teach me so I can teach the kids.

MichelleRM: wow...how long do they have to prepare overall.....this is an afterschool curricular thing right?

RobynN: Debra, Kristen, Julia, Pat and Marie, along with some other girls and mentors started a group for girls called Robot Chicks Union. That's what we are trying to spread through a grass roots movement

PatriciaCh: MORT is from Mount Olive....they are at the Palmetto Competition.....my team....is part of the Southern Florida Chapter of the Robot Chicks Union.....I gave a presentation....and the team was interested in forming a chapter for NJ

JuliaSt: Michelle- it depends on the school. I believe some schools offer this sort of thing as a class, but pretty much everyone puts in the afterschool time as well

RobynN: oh you should get a team started at your son's school

BjB waves to Kathie

KathieK: thanks

KathieK: Hi everyone

JuliaSt: Hi, Kathie!! I'm glad you could make it!

KathieK: I forgot... went for a walk instead!

JeffC: If you're not a member of this group yet, I am about to send out invitations to join. That way, you'll be able to post to Discussions throughout the month and stay in touch when live meetings aren't happening.

RobynN: it is usually after school, but can be incorporated into classes, depends on the school and curriculum

AmyHe: Michelle - it can be an afterschool or inschool thing. I've had my physics class participate before - we've done it as a "capstone" type of physics project where the kids work on it for 2 weeks and then we go to a competition - yes, lots of after-school time in there, but not formally organized - just on their own time

MichelleRM: oh okay

JuliaSt: It really is a big time commitment, though... We had a system to track how many hours we worked- I think I was averaging 4 hours a day my freshman year.. Back when I had very little homework!

PatriciaCh: yes...the whole process is time consuming for both the students and mentors

RobynN: it is a huge time commitment, but great fun and lots of learning on all sides

JuliaSt: But then I got to my first competition and realized that it was all worth it

RobynN: plus there is lots of scholarship money out there for kids who participate

PatriciaCh: That is the big thing.....lots of money out there by colleges and corporations

JuliaSt: The scholarship money wasn't the selling point for me when I was first looking at joining a team... But now that I've started to look at colleges, it's definitely been something I've been looking at!

KathieK: close to \$8M of scholarships for all FIRST program members this year

RobynN: right now there is about nine million out there

PatriciaCh: I think that is always not a concern until junior year..

RobynN: plus jobs

KathieK: A Vex member just received the first scholarship that we are aware of...

RobynN: Hi Kathie - I thought Dean said it was nine million

AmyHe: Sorry to change the subject - sort of a technical question that I haven't known who to ask, as no one else in my area does FLL : We have copies of "RIS" software that the kids use - it's older and it doesn't "mesh" real well with Windows XP - any suggestions on how to still be able to use the program?

KathieK: I thought it was over \$8M but the website is saying close to \$8M as of this week

KathieK: I think that was discussed on CD Amy - have you checked there?

PatriciaCh: can you switch to robolab 2.5...I think they are trying do away with RIS

PatriciaCh: also...they are changing the Mindstorms kit too...they will support the older ones for a little while

AmyHe: **KathieK** - which CD are you meaning?

JeffC: look behind your main window Debra... it should have flashed and be there.

RobynN: many of the competition judges and sponsors are from big business, the government, lots of networking

JuliaSt: I think she means www.chiefdelphi.com

PatriciaCh: CD means Chief Delphi...a forum for FIRST robotics

JuliaSt: it's a popular FIRST forum

AmyHe: Oh :) Thanks

PatriciaCh: yes...this is heavy duty....you can post questions on CD and someone will know the answer

RobynN: it is a message board that was formed several years ago by one of the FIRST teams, it's become "the" place to talk to everyone who is involved in FIRST

AmyHe: I know that RIS is real old, but it seemed to work so easily with the 5th graders in our groups - all the connecting the "blocks" to make a program ... we don't have anyone who really knows how to program, so it was a real simple program for us to use. I will check out that forum sometime. Thank you :)

RobynN: kids talk to each other, engineers and others post "white papers" on all sorts of topics, from technical to scouting to games

PatriciaCh: And that is what we are trying to do for the ladies on the teams....a place to ask questions

KathieK: Sorry, Amy, I thought you were familiar with ChiefDelphi... and my computer froze so I had to log back in again

KathieK: And can I put in a plug for NEMO please?

PatriciaCh: yes..please do

KathieK: NEMO (Non-Engineering Mentor Organization) is for mentors for ALL FIRST programs who deal with the non-technical stuff

KathieK: like travel, teambuilding, team organization, public relations, fundraising, etc

JuliaSt: Amy, about RIS... I always thought that RIS was so much easier then Robolab, but I think that once you get the hang of Robolab it's very simple- This past weekend there was a Girls Connect FLL workshop- we used Robolab and the girls all seemed to pick up on it very quickly.

RobynN: engineers and others post "white papers" on various topics, teams share their ideas on how to solve problems

PatriciaCh: I know the emphasis is use ROBOLAB....

AmyHe: Julia - I've heard that - I've messed with Robolab a little - guess I'll just have to put in the time and get to know it a little ... old habits die hard

JuliaSt: I know what you mean- I can't imagine giving up RIS, even knowing how easy Robolab is!

RobynN: I just got a VEX kit, going to try and learn easyC

PatriciaCh: It is hard to give things up

AmyHe: How much was the VEX kit compared to the cost of a mindstorms kit?

KathieK: ooh, jealous!

KristenK: I am not looking forward to learning the new programming software for mindstorms...

JuliaSt: That makes two of us, Robyn! I haven't gotten to play with my Vex kit, but I can't wait to start programming and everything

KristenK: I haven't gotten to play with my vex kits either

KristenK: this summer...:)

PatriciaCh: I heard that Radio Shack is discounting the VEX kits and discontinuing selling VEX

KathieK: I'm making Vex earrings for Atlanta, does that count?

RobynN: Kristen, my plan is to send out Greg's box tomorrow...I had to dig around for something the right size.

KathieK: RS is still selling some Vex stock in some stores. and some things online

KristenK: lol, thanks Robyn

KathieK: they consolidated stock to the stores which were selling the most. There is still no definitive word on if they are pulling out of the program

KathieK: but it's half-price right now, extended sale in some locations

PatriciaCh: that is good to know..

RobynN: there's still a bit of VEX around the RS stores here

RobynN: Kathie, according to Greg they are pulling out

JuliaSt: Yeah- around here, all of the RSs are down to their last few boxes of everything

RobynN: Tony Norman, of IFI bought the name....since the company makes the stuff, he plans to market it

PatriciaCh: I don't know what we have....a friend of mine is a dealer...he was hoping that VEX sold well

KathieK: I believe they will be, but FIRST until FIRST releases official info it's still "rumor".

MichelleRM: well I want to thank you all for sharing with me about FIRST. I found it really interesting. Unfortunately I have to go now (can't stay the full 2 hours).

KristenK: hahaha, try finding something in one of the Manchester area RSs

MichelleRM: Thanks for everything

KristenK: they only have starter kits now

JuliaSt: I'm glad we could help, Michelle!

PatriciaCh: Join us again

MichelleRM: I will.

RobynN: it was nice to "meet" you Michelle,

MichelleRM: Bye everyone!

RobynN: come back again

MichelleRM waves goodbye

NancyJK joined the room.

RobynN: Hi Nancy!

NancyJK: hello

KristenK: hi mommy

AmyHe: Kathie - going back to a question about NEMO - are you a regional group or national?

RobynN: Nancy, did you get to your meeting?

NancyJK: I just arrived home from Girls, Inc.

KathieK: We are international. It's a virtual organization. We have a private forum on ChiefDelphi and we do workshops as we are able (mainly in the northeast since that's where I live)...

DebraP: I have wanted to do this for a long time but it is so confusing. Too many choices

KathieK: and we'll have a website if I can get it up and running after this tonight!

RobynN: oh that will be great, Kathie

KathieK: we publish white papers on Chiefelphi also

AmyHe: Sounds good - what'll your website be?

JuliaSt: Well everyone, I'm going to get going so my mother can use the computer... But if you have any questions for me, she's just a shout away so feel free to ask!

KathieK: www.firstnemo.org

RobynN: we even have our own buttons, Amy...."I Found NEMO"

AmyHe: Thanks for the RIS advice Julia

DebraP: I got Patricia's info

KathieK: which I also have to make before Atlanta

PatriciaCh: Terrific...I want one!

AmyHe: I need NEMO for our teams! :)

RobynN: lol...I can't find mine :-/

KathieK: NEMO meet-and-greet in Atlanta - Thursday noon-2pm, location to be announced still

NancyJK: Nice write up in Parenthesis Kristen!

KathieK: also at BattleCry@WPI in June and at Monty Madness

KristenK: shhh...we are going to pretend that is not there

RobynN: why not make it near the Webhug, Kathie?

KathieK: we're hoping FIRST is giving us a room to use

RobynN: that would be awesome

KathieK: that's what we're waiting for

KathieK: They are being very supportive right now (yeah!)

MarieMS: Hi all - I'm back

NancyJK: So has the main focus tonight been getting ready for the Championship?

PatriciaCh: Lisa is not here....she was thinking of meet and greet at 12:30 by WEBhug....she may decide to cancel in lieu of a meeting

PatriciaCh: meeting

RobynN: we've really just been talking a little about FIRST

DebraP: This Tapped IN stuff is hard to understand, too many choices for a first timer

RobynN: it won't take long, Debra

NancyJK: I have almost figured out how to do it without looking at notes!

PatriciaCh: It takes time to get use to things....I know it took me a while

RobynN: I am so looking forward to Atlanta

PatriciaCh /waves

PatriciaCh: I don't have my cheat sheet for the other ones

MarieMS: Hi ladies, I'll be judging during the RCU meeting - so I can't join you - did you finalize the agenda and what you want to accomplish?

KathieK: when is the meeting?

PatriciaCh: noI was hoping that Lisa can make it tonight....

RobynN: 3 p.m. Thursday

KathieK: I will try and make it then. I'm volunteering with Vex on Thurs

RobynN: Marie, do you know what you will be judging?

NancyJK: I bet I am also judging during the meeting; unless there is an hour off for lunch but I bet there isn't.

PatriciaCh: Tiffany is making a video....she asking everyone who has photos or videos shots...send it to her ASAP

MarieMS: Oh yes, I am judging Research for FLL - and it's straight through the RCU meeting.

RobynN: I will tell my kids to watch out for you

PatriciaCh: I have to post the request on Yahoo

KristenK: you might still be able to come

KristenK: try and work with the BAE people or something

KristenK: in 2004, Linda covered me for the RCU meeting

MarieMS: Hmm... I'll try..

PatriciaCh: I will attend the meeting....we have enough teachers this time to cover

MarieMS: Meantime - you guys have a wonderful opportunity to kick this up a notch

NancyJK: I will try to check out the schedule; you could be right.

RobynN: Pat, what does Tiffany want on the video, just girls stuff?

KristenK: Kristen and Kerry are judging this year too...

DebraP: I thank all of you for your help and wish you good doings with your projects and contests

RobynN: I am volunteering as a floater, so my time is more flexible

PatriciaCh: well....anything really...lots of girls doing things will be great

PatriciaCh: contact us if you need anything

MarieMS: I would like to make a few suggestions about the meeting

PatriciaCh: We are here to help each other

PatriciaCh: ok

NancyJK: Kristen, the pictures you wanted were they for you to work with or for Tiffany?

DebraP: bye

PatriciaCh: bye Debra

RobynN: Debra, come back and visit again...bye for now

MarieMS: first - I suggest we have an "interested mentors" meeting SEPERATE from the RCU meeting - to discuss things of importance to we adults - but not take time away from the students for their own discussions - last year I felt we didn't accomplish that.

MarieMS: what do you think

RobynN: that could be part of the NEMO meeting, perhaps

PatriciaCh: That will be great.....I love to meet other mentors

RobynN: me too...

PatriciaCh: mentors need help too

KristenK: ya, it would be good to make sure that everyone is on the same page for the RCU meeting too

RobynN: so true

NancyJK: In many ways you need the mentors to "mentor" the girls

KathieK: this mentor needs a LOT of help!

RobynN: lololol

RobynN: you took the words out of my mouth

PatriciaCh: lol...this mentor too:}

MarieMS: I agree mentors need help too - but we need to let the RCU girls connect without us controlling the conversation.

RobynN: Kathie, do you know if Jenny will be coming to Atlanta?

DebraP: I must be an idiot. To join poetry click on Susan R. in the online tab, no susan R there

PatriciaCh: quite true

KathieK: yes, she is also volunteering there and doing the NEMO meeting with me on Thursday

BjB: Debra, you're not an idiot...just in the student campus so you don't see Sue's name

RobynN: we need to be there for the RCU girls just as friends and advisors

BjB: Debra, go to favorite places in the top right of your chat screen

MarieMS: Agree Robyn

BjB: and click on TI Reception and press the go button

RobynN: oh good, she's been so helpful to us this year

BjB: oops...top right of your screen, not chat screen

RobynN: and Chesapeake just frazzled her nerves

KathieK: Jenny and I commiserate on a daily basis

MarieMS: So, let's separate the conversation - I suggest that at the RCU meeting, you announce a time for the mentors to get together in an ad hoc manner - so , if any mentor has a topic - you can defer to that meeting

RobynN: I'll bet - I try not to bother her too much

PatriciaCh: do we need a room?

MarieMS: I think you/we could go out in the courtyard, or on the mezzanine

KathieK: getting a room is difficult down there.

PatriciaCh: ok

KathieK: there is another event going on at the same time I think as the conferences...

RobynN: how about getting together for lunch or a snack somewhere?

NancyJK: Out in the open means people will see us also.

AmyHe: Thanks all for your advice with FLL and my RIS questions - have to head out, but I will try to check you back here next time :)

MarieMS: PS - let me know where/when - my cell number is 603-305-5942 - you can tell me where to go!

KathieK: bye Amy

RobynN: if the weather is nice, the courtyard would be nice

RobynN: bye Amy

PatriciaCh: yes do come backI hope we help you

AmyHe: Thanks!

KristenK: I wouldn't mind having an excuse to sit in the sun

AmyHe left the room (signed off).

RobynN: I like checking out the prototype cars

KathieK: I think I need to go judge some websites AND work on the NEMO one. Please let me know where you decide to meet. I will try and join you if I can get free!

MarieMS: So, maybe we ask two of the mentors on this call --- hmmm..... who could that be - to be the lead for a mentor meeting to be announced at the RCU meeting and communicated to those of us on cell phone, etc. separately.

KathieK: bye

PatriciaCh: no clue who????

KathieK left the room (signed off).

MarieMS: hmmm... do the initials Pat Chen mean anything?

KristenK: hahahaha

PatriciaCh: LOL

KristenK: I second that vote

RobynN: (I'm hiding)

PatriciaCh: oh thanks

NancyJK: I thought you meant RN

RobynN: lol

RobynN: btw, Kristen, I thought it was nice that you wished Greg a happy birthday on your IM away message yesterday

PatriciaCh: I think we should generalize an agenda for the RCU....I can communicate that to LISA

MarieMS: For myself - I'd suggest that Lisa et.al. think about what they could accomplish in Atlanta

PatriciaCh: I get the feeling that she is somewhat overwhelm at this time

RobynN: me too

NancyJK: An update of each regional RCU should take place; Then one on the newsletter....

KristenK: why? college is not overwhelming at all...YA RIGHT

MarieMS: It could be a "meet and greet" - make sure everyone knows one another so when they speak virtually they know who they are talking to. Or, it could be around sharing experiences

KristenK: How is Lisa holding up, does she need help?

NancyJK: I like the meet and greet idea as long as the girls do go and meet other girls and don't stay with whom they are comfortable.

PatriciaCh: I am not sure.....we had a hard time getting hold of her for the newsletter....Tiff asked me to proof read ...so the errors are all mine

PatriciaCh: Lisa emailed me that she would like to cancel meet and greet and hold a meeting

NancyJK: I haven't had a chance to check it out yet. Looking forward to that before I go off to do school work.

RobynN: I think it should be both, Marie...maybe also they can develop a standard of some sort for new chapters.

NancyJK: Marie, don't we have some standards that were prepared?

MarieMS: Standards are on the yahoo group file area.

MarieMS: Can I throw out an idea for all of you to discuss?

RobynN: I talked to tons of people at Chesapeake, gave out the flyer, but didn't get any "live" takers...except for the one who talked to Kristen in Boston

RobynN: sure

MarieMS: I'd like to suggest that the girls have a Project that they work on in Atlanta. The one that resonates for me is if they could spend one or two hours brainstorming how male mentors could encourage them to be successful FIRST participants. This is based on conversations with Kevin and with several men I am working with.

MarieMS: So, the result is us telling them how to help us

PatriciaCh: That is a good one

PatriciaCh: That was one of the topic that we had in the Florida Regional meeting.....

MarieMS: To be successful it would need to be carefully moderated so it's not negative - just a positive, interaction - Pat - how did it go in Florida? Can you share that with us?

RobynN: that would be good - I know my husband would be interested, although he may be too busy with the team to attend the meeting...but I can present it to him

NancyJK: I think one or two hours of brainstorming is too long. The topic is a good one though.

PatriciaCh: the girls came up with.....if the student attached herself to one mentor.....the mentor is more willing to help...in other words....they felt that males tend to ask other males

MarieMS: True

PatriciaCh: how to break the trend....now that is the real question

PatriciaCh: I notice on my team....there are mentors who are gender blind...not too many unfortunately....it is still the same old stuff

RobynN: can we find out what women of influence are attending the Championship? maybe we can invite them to attend, give their input as well....

MarieMS: We could ask Karen?

PatriciaCh: Gwen D mentors a team too

PatriciaCh: will she be there?

RobynN: I think that male mentors would help girls..

MarieMS: Robyn, I am a little worried though that we're talking AT the membership - this is an opportunity for them to talk amongst themselves and TO us

PatriciaCh: They would ...if they thought of asking a girl to do a task.....

MarieMS: No Gwen is not going

RobynN: a big problem is how to convince the girls (some of them at least) that there's more to life than boys

MarieMS: Robyn, isn't some of that helping them understand that they can celebrate their own accomplishments?

MarieMS: They don't need a boyfriend to validate themselves?

PatriciaCh: one of our mentor asked the male student to mill down a piece...he had to tell the mentor that he couldn't do it and Tiffany could....and they all know that she could use the equipment....but it didn't occur to the mentor to ask her...she was only standing next to the other student

RobynN: yes, this is very true - but I know from seeing the few girls on my team that they reverted to "type" at the regional...

RobynN: I was soooooo frustrated, our girls are smart and capable, if they want to be

PatriciaCh: yes....that is why there is a trend for all girl and all boy classes

MarieMS: Then we need to make it o.k for them to be - and celebrate when they do....

RobynN: so you've really pinned it, Marie - how do we convince the girls that they are capable persons?

MarieMS: Sharing stores of success - of when they succeeded - letting others know they CAN win

PatriciaCh: It is also the culture of where they live and what they are exposed to

RobynN: that's true, Pat

MarieMS: Pat - we need to expose them all to a culture of WINNING girls - without needing to wear sexy clothes and give in

RobynN: we need to get to young girls, before they get intimidated or influenced by the behavior of the boys

PatriciaCh: at our regional...we arrived at a mission statement saying just that...

MarieMS: WE - are winners - Yikes, I'm sounding like a commercial

PatriciaCh: we can do it...and will support each other

PatriciaCh: or Woodie!

RobynN: Woodie would be pleased

MarieMS: Yes, we need to get them early - but those in FRC - let's help them understand they are winners and help them celebrate it.

PatriciaCh: Yes....get them early like in JFLL

PatriciaCh: it is okay to have brains...

RobynN: I tell our girls how to play the stereotype game and win...how many schools need and want smart girls to go into science, math and engineering

MarieMS: I would say - it's SEXY to have brains!

PatriciaCh: you know.....I rather see them wearing the sexy clothes....show the world that they have brains and are proud of it

RobynN: our own daughters got caught in middle school, despite having two parents who championed their brains

PatriciaCh: then I lucked out....my daughter is not into it

PatriciaCh: I was told that I was a terrible mother and influence

MarieMS: So, let's take that theme - it's better to be brainy - or it's sexy to be smart - or something like that - and get the girls to interact around it.....

RobynN: well, I hoped to get our girls into science fields, but they did not pursue "typical" girl subjects

NancyJK: Does their interaction with fathers then make the difference?

RobynN: you know, Marie...maybe we need to use mantras like that on RCU buttons or jewelry

PatriciaCh: you may have a point Nancy

PatriciaCh: yes..like finding NEMO

RobynN: I don't know, Nancy - I think our daughters and Kristen benefited from having dads who let them know it's ok to be smart

PatriciaCh: Robyn....quite true...we did the same for Tiffany

PatriciaCh: I see the big push in our middle school is the looks....

MarieMS: I must say that my Dad pushed me - he told me I shouldn't sell myself short - that I had talent and I needed to push it to the limit - and I'm eternally grateful

NancyJK: Right, that is what I mean....those girls with "aggressive" and progressive in the sciences are more supportive of all not just the boys

PatriciaCh: so we NEED the DADS....to hear the girls speak...like Kevin

PatriciaCh: some of the mentors are DADS...they need to hear what the girls are saying

RobynN: my mom was my motivation, she became a lawyer in the 1940's, more as a matter of need than to be a pioneer, but I never understood Women's Lib, cause I always knew I could be anything

NancyJK: whoops forgot Dads in that sentence

MarieMS: But we need to teach the Dads what the power they have is, and how they can use it to be a productive and supportive force in their daughters' lives

MarieMS: wonderful Robyn!

NancyJK: But then what about the fatherless girls? or the ones with shy, quiet Dads or the ones that believe women should be barefoot and in the kitchen?

NancyJK: Maybe that is where the male mentors come in.

RobynN: we need to find a way to get to the male FIRST mentors, give them guidelines for helping the girls

MarieMS: My Mom was a doctor - at a time when women were not supposed to be doctors - so it never occurred to me that gender roles were valid

NancyJK: Perhaps the girls could brainstorm a list of "how to help us." hints

RobynN: Marie - my mom is an alumna of Morris High School from the Bronx (class of 33!) - she is tickled to hear how well they do in FIRST

RobynN: that's a great idea, Nancy

MarieMS: So, can I go back and say - can we have the RCU members do a brainstorming session where they offer help to the male mentors - here's what motivates and enables us - then we take that and create a How to mentor a girl brochure.....?

PatriciaCh: my husband is the quiet one in our family.....he always told our daughter that she can do anything

RobynN: maybe Dave and Fred could help out

NancyJK: Well, I matured fatherless so that is why my daughter has to teach me!!!

RobynN: oh Marie, what a great idea!

PatriciaCh: Morris HS has a great FRC bot this year....tell your mom

RobynN: Pat, she has been added to their email list, so she knows. I'm not sure if she'll be able to, but I was thinking of bringing her to Atlanta

RobynN: either that, or we'll have to take a trip up to NY to see the school

NancyJK: So the agenda for the meeting has a meet and greet section; a tell what each regional RCU has done; and a brainstorm session on "how male mentors can help girls achieve"????

PatriciaCh: She will get a kick of seeing the school

PatriciaCh: and then open to questions?

NancyJK: If 15 minutes is given to each section that leaves 15 minutes for wrap up. Holding the girls for an hour is probably the maximum if we want them to be useful on their teams.!!!

RobynN: I know she will - it was just the castle part of the building when she attended

MarieMS: Nancy, those are my thoughts - but I'd ask Lisa and Kristen - also, I'd like to be sure that the brochure section be VERY carefully facilitated so it continues in a positive direction

PatriciaCh: Kristen...can you communicate that to Lisa?

NancyJK: In true brainstorming, statements are made withOUT comments given. Then you go back and debate whether they belong or not on the list.

MarieMS: We may ALSO have a special guest for 10 mins - I'll tell you more when and if I get more.

NancyJK: Bet she is doing ten things while she is doing this chat!

PatriciaCh: yes...betcha!

MarieMS: Yep!

NancyJK: Well, then we need to watch when the special guest is there and what we want the guest to see of the girls; like do you want a guest to see them brainstorm?

MarieMS: PS - I didn't let everyone know - but I gave a presentation to our CTO (chief Technical officer) last week - and I started with the RCU newsletter - he LOVED it.

PatriciaCh: that is great.....

PatriciaCh: I plan to bring copies with me....

NancyJK: I would want the guest to hear the updates on the regional meetings and then a newsletter update (positive only).

RobynN: or would it be better for the guest to address the girls with her insights?

MarieMS: Nancy - yes - the guest would be part of brainstorming - but I want to be sure I've really got something to offer to you before I say more.

NancyJK: to hear from the speaker would be perhaps one of the best parts of the meeting.

PatriciaCh: it would be beneficial if the girls hear from someone other than their mentors

RobynN: We went to the Rochester NY regional last year and heard Ursula Burns from Xerox speak....wish we could entice her

NancyJK: Yes, I do see where the guest would be an asset to the brainstorming or perhaps to the consolidation of the brainstorming

NancyJK: Wish Kristen would answer as I believe she knows Ursula Burns????

PatriciaCh: we mentors take the place of parentsthey can tune us out

RobynN: perhaps the guest would be able to spend the entire meeting with the girls and just address them as a summary, or maybe at the beginning

MarieMS: So, folks - we have a basic structure for the meeting - assuming that's o.k. with Lisa and Kristen.

MarieMS: Then we should fill in how to facilitate it, and the mentor meeting separate - if you would like, I'd be happy to write this all up and send it out. But, I'd like to be sure of something.....

PatriciaCh: now....do you all still want to get together at some point for dinner or something?

NancyJK: We need to perhaps guide the girls on the agenda and add to it as the guest is available? The right guest could be a terrific asset in narrowing down the brainstorming list.

MarieMS: I'm passionate about this.... Am I hijacking the meeting? Be honest - I rely on you all - I just would like to see us all do something that meaningfully adds to ours and our mentees lives.

PatriciaCh: Mentor meeting...have we decided when

RobynN: it would be nice to get together for dinner...do you think we should play it by ear, though, based on whether the teams need us?

PatriciaCh: I am with you on this one Marie....

NancyJK: Marie I like your idea and Pat getting together might be easy for those of us unattached to a team but I am not sure about those of you that will go attached.

RobynN: I am also passionate about this - too many girls sit back and wait for someone else to make it happen when they are smart enough to be the movers and shakers

PatriciaCh: I am attached to my team...but they owe me one...my hardship will be transportation

RobynN: mine too

RobynN: where are you staying?

NancyJK: Perhaps once we are there we will all know what our time constraints will be like.

NancyJK: We are at the Days INN

MarieMS: I'm at the Ritz

PatriciaCh: I only told Marie...but this is my last year with my team....except for my presence on behalf of the RCU

RobynN: I hope to bring our teacher/mentor - she is a strong black woman who tells it like it is...

PatriciaCh: I am not sure where we are staying...it is outside of Atlanta

NancyJK: Pat,

RobynN: We are staying at the Marriott Fairfield in town, about 6 blocks from the GWCC

BjB heads out. Thanks for letting me lurk.

PatriciaCh: I cannot do it all.....I want to be able to travel to the other teams in our chapter and help make things happen

BjB waves goodnight

RobynN: you've done so much, Pat

MarieMS: bye bj

BjB left the room (signed off).