TEAM 5665 – CHAIRMAN'S ESSAY

Deaf.

That's what we were 4 years ago.

We were just a bunch of kids with a big dream. We didn't know that we could make our dreams come true until we met the FIRST foundation. A foundation which helps kids to discover their sparkle. That's how we founded our team SPARC, with an instant sparkle. Team SPARC consists of 1 mentor and 26 students. We have been on our journey for 4 years. While being freed of our deafness we decided to help real deaf people. We created "optical-acoustic glasses". A creation that warns its owner by colour senses about the direction and intensity of surrounding sounds such as voices and warning signals. The project itself was really compelling at the start. We had been working on this project for 2 years without getting any results. During that time, we were slowly losing hope and people around us were telling us to abandon the project and move on to another one. But we don't lose hope easily. We grew up reading life stories of famous scientists. Stephen Hawking for example, his life was full of tragedies, but he overcame every single of them, published his *A Brief History of Time* and changed the world. Reading about their life, we were taught that we shouldn't abandon our dreams, so we worked twice as hard and were able to accomplish. Famous author George Orwell said that "To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle." As if confirming his quote, we discovered that our project was much easier than we thought. This year we finally concluded the project with great success.

But that wasn't enough for us, we wish to do something that would affect everybody out there, something that would touch every single person's heart. We wanted to inspire little children's minds and wanted them to question. So, every year at October 29 (Turkish Republic Day) we choose a school in Anatolia which is in a poor condition to donate books that we've gathered from our school. We give them our own books instead of buying new ones because we believe that the warmth that old books give us is much more than the new books and we build them a library. While building their library, we teach them the basics of Mindstorm and build a FLL robot with them. Most of our team members have participated FLL in their middle-school and we love mentoring about something that reminds us good memories. Firstly, we started team Spartans. Through our mentorship to Spartans they have won Inspiration and Research awards. In 2016, we started Hüseyin Avni Sözen (HASAL) FLL Team and Borusan Avcılar FLL Team. We trained mentors for FLL teams, consequently, they could teach to their own students. This way, we aim to make a chain effect that could train generations.

Nevertheless, we wanted to share our experience with other children who do not have the means to access to robotics and science. Thus, we have organised our first Maker Faire on May 13rd. SP Maker Faire is an event where creativity, craftsmanship and invitation are celebrated. It is aimed to please everyone who loves technology, is devoted to teaching others and loves to create things. It is where every maker shares information while learning from others, regardless of their age or skills. As 5665, we organize this event and share our experience with more than 50 schools and companies. As we tried to introduce FRC to our friends, we also learned a lot from them. With SP Makers and other schools, we organized many different workshops for students who would like to learn more about Arduino, 3D Design, FLL, VEX and much more. Since we had so many positive feedback, we decided to make the second one this year. We are also the team who distributed VEX in Turkey. We had workshops in Aydın, Izmir, Istanbul, Ankara and Çankırı and gave them 30 VEX kit. We also

participated in Haydarpaşa Maker Faire in November 12 and showed our VEX robot. Every year we have a Code Week in our school and help our friends learn the language of Python. We designed an application which is called SCODE. SCODE is an app which provides programming and algorithms education. It was created for children especially for kids who participate in FLL and Jr.FLL could easily start to learn the world of coding.

However, we realized that being a kid in East Anatolia costs much more than the need of technology. As we grow up our parents have always taught us to empathise and we also believe that the basis of understanding, respecting and helping someone depends on this ability. Hence, while trying to help them we saw that some of those children, particularly girls, can't even go to school. That's why we decided to contribute to social responsibility projects.

Every 24th November is celebrated as the Teacher's Day in Turkey. And for us, it is very special and meaningful to celebrate this day. We think that the best present for all of the teachers is not something material, but to see another child getting the chance to go to school... For this purpose, since 2015, we have started the "Anadolu'da Bir Kızım Var" (I have a daughter in Anatolia) project to support two girls' expenses of education in Anatolia every year with the help of donations.

In the meantime, since last year, we have sold heart-shaped chocolates on valentine's day for Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği (Association for the Support of Contemporary Living) in our school, we desire that warmth of our heart can reach families out there who lives on the edge of poverty. At the same time, we had plans for animals too, we built houses from recycled materials for cats and birds in our workshop.

Ever since we have noticed that changing a country's conception of the world depends on changing the education system of the country, we have been trying to do our best by spreading the message of FIRST. Turkey has a rote-learning based education system and this system has a bad impact on the students. By changing the system, we aim to create one which can allow students to discover their potential on maths, science and logic-based activities and which can allow STEM to be a part of our education system. So, we help the creation of STEM centre in Payas which assists students to have the education of coding and robotics. And we made presentation in Izmit, Hatay, Aydın, Bursa and Antep. We let students from Muğla Yönelt College, Ankara Sınav College, Hüseyin Avni Sözen Public High School, Köyceğiz Science High School join our team. Exclusively, we have as much girls as boys in our team because we believe that a society without woman is a society without a future. Mev Makers, the team we have started last year, went to Florida Regional and showed a great achievement as a rookie team. Team Kaiser 6989 won Highest Rookie Seed Award in 2017 Turkish Off Season This year we have started 2 new teams; Team rOctopus and Team Oksef. Team Oksef will attend Istanbul Regional and Team Roctopus will attend Shanghai Regional this year. Also this year, we have started negotiations with our sister schools in France to start a new French FRC team.

Long story short, we can say that we try to bring out the Hawking's in ourselves. To write our own *Philosophiæ Naturalis Prinicpia Mathematica* and to publish our *Annus Mirabilis,* we aim to never abandon our dreams. With the inspiration of FIRST, we know that we have traded our deafness with science and taught other aspiring engineers, scientists and mathematicians how to do so.