

The Spikes #2212 are not what you would call a normal team. We are based in a city where most of us don't live, we don't have a robotics major in our school, and our main mentor does not have a technical background. But we are the loudest, most passionate and most enthusiastic team. The Spikes have without a doubt evolved into a force which is known throughout our school, community, and FIRST.

The Spikes have been competing for nine years. In our drive to succeed we have never forgotten how important it is to be part of a community. We believe that FIRST's community begins with us. Every team member will tell you this - we are a family: we eat together, work together, and laugh together. We have great parties and fun social evenings. We help each other with schoolwork and personal matters. Thanks to FIRST, above all, we are a group of friends.

Our team is led by students. We encourage our team members to take an active part in the management and decision-making processes. We know that our philosophy may not give us the best robot, but we can proudly say that every student takes part in the building, designing, and programming of it. Although we rely on and are assisted by our mentors, ultimately the decision and responsibility belong to us. We believe that this way students get the most out of FRC.

We have found that the more we expose our community of parents and sponsors to what we are doing, the more involved they become. It's common for parents, classmates, younger siblings and sponsors to be around during the build season and throughout the year. We are constantly keeping them updated and especially during the build season, by sending weekly e-mails, which they print in their newsletters. As a result, our sponsors have been with us for years, and the Spikes' family keeps growing. We get our school involved too. Our team enthusiastically participates in our school's annual open day where we demonstrate our robots and explain to all the potential students and parents what FIRST can do for their child's future. In addition, since we are team #2212, on December 22nd, we gather the entire 9th graders for a series of lectures about science and technology. By reaching out through Facebook, our website and updates, we constantly build and sustain relationships with our supporters from around our community.

Spreading the significance of science and technology to as many of our peers as we can is very important to us. Our longest running project is our annual summer workshops. For the last 5 years, we have held a week-long program for our school's 9th and 10th graders, during the summer vacation. Our intention is not only to raise new "Spikers" but to teach new kids about planning, designing, building, and programming a robot from scratch. Our workshops are well established and have lit the spark of interest among many and this makes us proud. The workshops supply hands-on experience while teaching about FIRST, FIRST's values, the team, and the meaning of being a part of an FRC team.

The Spikes have gone from strength to strength in how we affect our local community in Lod. We realize that helping your neighbors is just as important as winning a competition. We try and find a place for each of our team members to make a difference in one of our communities.

Our first local community project is the Kinect project. The local hospital Asaf HaRofe has enthusiastically agreed to work with us. The idea is to create an innovative and ingenious game to help with the physical therapy exercises which injured kids have to undergo. We have already developed two games, both were popular among the children. Our ultimate goal is to reach more hospitals and develop more games, so we can help as many children as we can to heal faster and in an enjoyable way.

In one of our most exciting projects, Spikes team members volunteer at a community center in Lod (YMC - previously "Club Shahar") for underprivileged Ethiopian children. We began by tutoring the children in reading, writing and in STEM subjects such as math and basic science. Now in our second year, we have continued and expanded our support by building their website and starting an FLL team. We feel that our mentoring these kids gives them a real chance to finish school with a science-based Bagrut, which will enable them to join the technological industry in the future. "Your team introduced the kids to a new world of robotics and technology which has shortened their way to activities such as these." (Avi, manager of YMC)

Since our inception, we have stressed the importance of helping other FRC teams. We have facilitated the growth of 9 rookie teams to date: 3211, 4661, 3087, 4406, 4586, 4320, 5135, 5614 and 5635. Although these teams are not rookies anymore we still keep in contact and are always available for help.

This year, just like in the past, we have adopted a rookie team: 5635. During the Falafel build season, we lent them many items including parts of the robot control system. We visit their workshop often and advise them in mechanics, electronics, CADing, and programming. In addition, we provide assistance in administrative fields. Due to financial difficulties, they were in danger of not being able to participate this year. We helped them write an organized letter to sponsors which enabled them to find major sponsors. Now, you can see the team proudly participate in the competition.

Our help doesn't end with the rookie teams. Last build season, team 4406 were going through some hardship and confusion. Our team welcomed them with open arms into our workshop, and with our help, they were able to come to the competition day with a well-functioning robot. As The Spikes, we believe that every FRC team should arrive at the competition with a working robot and in high spirits. As a result, our motto is to Graciously and Professionally help any team in need of assistance. Over the years we've aided countless teams, whether by lending equipment, providing professional assistance or by helping with team management. It's no wonder we have won Gracious Professionalism 5 times. In addition, to strengthen our impact, team 2212 contributed to two FIRST seminars. We gave lectures on obtaining and maintaining sponsors. In the lectures we gave tips on letter writing, finding sponsors and making a good impression. After the seminars, we helped individual teams in that matter.

The Spikes believe that promoting science and technology at a young age is of the utmost importance. To that end, we try to reach as many children as we can. A most effective way to do this is by starting and mentoring FLL teams.

Our inspiration in the FLL community is widespread. Over the years Spikes members have mentored and helped over 10 teams, culminating in this year's focus on 3 socially marginal teams. Team 1064 composed of Ethiopian boys from YMC, has been a challenge for us and we are proud of their winning this year's judges award for being the team with the most potential in future FLL competitions. The Arab school team 1149 won the innovation solution prize and went forward to the Israeli championship.

We carry on assembling most of the FLL mission kits for the competitions and have continued sending referees, judges, and volunteers to various competitions. When volunteers are most needed, FIRST knows they can count on us. Our involvement doesn't stop there. A 2-day seminar was initiated this year by the Spikes, where veteran FLL mentors taught new mentors what FLL is all about, how to work with children, and about the project and robot. The seminar was so successful that we will definitely make it an annual seminar.

We continued our community work by hosting our first annual bowl-a-thon. We raised over 4000 shekels (1800 dollars) which were used to donate 2 computers to a nearby Arab school in need. While recruiting sponsors we talked about FIRST'S values with neighbors, schoolmates, and relatives. That way, we showed our different communities that we do more than just robots. This exposure gave many people a glimpse into what we do here in FIRST.

We are most proud of our alumni. They apply the values and knowledge they gained from their time at the team to continue the message of FIRST. More than 80% of our graduates work in the fields of science, serve in top military technology units and study advanced STEM subjects in university. The team has brought our alumni to the next level of involvement in the FIRST community. In any given season you can find at least 15 graduates coming back as mentors. In addition, our drive to assist FRC teams even pushed 5 of our graduates to serve as mentors for other teams. Our graduates and members play key roles at FIRST competitions such as referees, CSAs, head queuers, and pit admins. Our team graduates also helped develop FIOS - the FIRST Israel Online System, which improves the equipment purchasing and team registration in Israel for FRC, FLL, and Jr. FLL. One of our graduates even works for FIRST Israel today.

Three of our graduates are responsible for the establishment of the MOST group. This is an organization that helps teams from all over the country gain knowledge and experience both prior to and during the build season. As part of the group's work, our graduates organize the annual Falafel competition whose goal is twofold. First by helping FRC teams try new building, programming, and design concepts, while at the same time encouraging the students to come together as a team. The competition is of great importance for many teams as it gives them the opportunity to experience a real competition before the Israel regional.

We believe in the values and goals of FIRST and are guided by them in everything we do. FIRST has given us the opportunity to make a difference, which we have fully embraced, starting with our team members, and then reaching out to the wider community.