# 2014 Chairman's Award Essay

**Briefly describe the impact of the FIRST program on team participants with special emphasis on the 2013/2014 year and the preceding two to five years**

Truck Town Thunder (T3) is a hub of skills and opportunities, from time management, community service, and gracious professionalism to leadership, technical experience, and a scholarship program for seniors totaling $14,000 in the past 4 years. Team members join not knowing the difference between a hammer and a wrench, and leave as responsible leaders with a host of desirable skills for the world. 100% of the team's seniors have gone on to receive a higher education, mostly in STEM fields.

**Describe the impact of the FIRST program on your community with special emphasis on the 2013/2014 year and the preceding two to five years**

We started a partner drive this year to form more local relationships. We also have been running demos throughout the community to promote the four levels of FIRST. We are also required to complete 25 hours of community service before build season. Orange shirts at many different events throughout the community sheds light on FIRST and represents students on T3 as positive role models. Students have to use gracious professionalism and put others before themselves.

**Team's innovative or creative method to spread the FIRST message**

T3 incorporates the FIRST message into many things. We present our program and robots at the 4-H Science Day, along with demos, Septemberfest and Science Day at a local elementary school to intrigue children in STEM and spread the word of FIRST. T3 also runs a biannual metal driver; one in fall to fundraise for the team and one in spring to donate to Relay for Life. T3 also hosts an annual program through the Boy Scouts of America to help scouts earn their Robotics Merit Badge.

**Describe examples of how your team members act as role models and inspire other FIRST team members to emulate**

The number one thing we embrace as being a part of FIRST, is gracious professionalism. By displaying this, T3 remains a close-knit team, and we inspire younger teams to work together, even when stress is high. Our team's dedication also affects our performance. The students' passion and hard work ensures a successful team that others strive to achieve. By running our team through characters like these, we have become a successful team over the years, and our sustainability is admirable.

**Describe the team's initiatives to help start or form other FRC teams**

3 Teams and looking for more, T3 has been starting teams from the thumb of Michigan to California. Mr. Andrews, a former mentor of T3, moved to California 3 years ago. He loved being in FIRST so much he started his own FRC team, 4643. This year FiM wanted Michigan teams to help get a rookie team started. We had already started to help team 5114, the Titanium Tigers, out of Fenton High School. We mentored this team before being asked to start a rookie team by FiM.

**Describe the team's initiatives to help start or form other FIRST teams**

T3 started 21 teams, including 2 FRC, 5 FTC, 4 FLL, and 10 Jr. FLL. The T3 Youth Program for FLL and Jr. FLL brought in over 100 interested kids. Most seniors were leaders of a FLL team or Jr. FLL team. Not just seniors helped out, over 35 T3 members participated in helping young kids learn FIRST principles. The T3 Youth Program bloomed this year, even hosting a program orientation where parents could come in to learn about the different levels of FIRST.

**Describe the team's initiatives on assisting other FIRST teams (including Jr.FLL, FLL, FTC, & FRC) with progressing through the FIRST program**

This year, T3 has helped form 33 other FIRST teams, in all tiers. To help FRC teams, we documented all our Robot 101 seminars and made the material available on our team website. Students from our team also attended the Rookie Chassis Build at Kettering University to help mentor less experienced teams. We are also spreading the word of FIRST in Fenton by starting both an FRC and FTC team this year, where T3 mentors and alumni are giving guidance and recommendations at meetings.

**Describe how your team works with other FIRST teams to serve as mentors to younger or less experienced FIRST teams (includes Jr.FLL, FLL, FTC, & FRC teams)**

T3 mentors many new teams, from Jr. FLL to FRC. This year, team members ran and mentored 4 new FLL teams. We also started 10 Jr. FLL teams, from two schools, all of which were mentored by students on the team. This winter, we held our first Jr. FLL Expo in Brandon. The team ran an FTC Kickoff event this year, where we mentored 40 teams. We also worked with FRC Teams 469 and 2834 to run the Bloomfield Girls Robotics Competition this fall. We also attended FRC Team 2337’s Chassis Build.

**Describe your Corporate/University Sponsors**

Throughout the years, T3 has gained many sponsors. Without them, our team would not exist. Our most generous sponsor is General Motors. They pay our event registration and provide us with experienced mentors. Continental has become a vital sponsor for us recently. We have mentors employed there, including our 2013 Woodie Flowers Nominee. Brandon High School, the home of our team, provides us with teachers as mentors. US Air Force gives us grants, and one of the mentors of our team is a veteran.

**Describe the strength of your partnership with your sponsors with special emphasis on the 2013/2014 year and the preceding two to five years**

T3, this year, has continued their partner drive. This has been going on for quite a while, and over time, the team has gained many consistent partners. We have created sponsors that not only give monetary donations, but in kind donations, or mentors that help assist the team.

We also hold an annual sponsor night to thank our local businesses for their help. Our school's teachers help us as well, by mentoring and providing a location. More teachers are recognizing FIRST and becoming involved.

**Describe how your team would explain what FIRST is to someone who has never heard of it**

FIRST is a phenomenal program where students learn from their mentors, and aspire to become leaders as great as theirs. On this life changing journey, students get the opportunity to excel in both business and technological aspects, while being involved with a program bigger than themselves. This life changing journey promotes "nerds" to form relationships and work outside of their comfort zone to help prepare for college and to bring back America's technological advantage.

**Briefly describe other matters of interest to the FIRST judges, if any**

Despite all of our new outreach this year, T3 has continued to uphold our relationship with old partners and activities. For the 9th consecutive year, T3 has partnered with the Michigan Renaissance Festival to cook turkey legs and run booths when they are in need of volunteers. This June, we ran our 4th annual Lego Camp, where our number of campers doubled from last year. We also went on our yearly team building trip, to help everyone become more familiar with others and grow as a team.