

Organizing and Involving Parents

Communicating with parents

Parent involvement is extremely beneficial to any FIRST robotics team. For this to be possible, it is crucial that parents are updated about the team. Over the last few years, our team has worked very hard to ensure that our parents are as up to date as possible. We have done so by sending all emails to parents as well as students and encouraging parents to attend our weekly meetings.

<http://www.usfirst.org/community/volunteers/get-involved>

Organizing parents

Many parents are intimidated about taking on too much responsibility. By breaking up the big jobs and becoming more organized parents can:

- Create a carpool list to share on Google spread sheet at home
- Communicating with the lead mentor or teacher this can be done via e-mail or face to face
- Writing letters to restaurants or grocery stores asking for donations. Be sure that the lead teacher and or mentor check the letter so they know what is being asked for
- Creating, sharing, and keeping track of a spread sheet for a feeding schedule during build season (Remind parents a few days before hand if they signed-up for dinner duty)
- Keeping the snack area stocked (this should include some plates, utensils, napkins, drinks and snacks)
- Research, make reservations, and place lunch orders for places when traveling with your team

Getting ready to feed your team during build season

If your school is a Charter 1 school or you would like to try to get food donations for build season or a local regional you will need to start sending out letters as soon as possible, usually between September and beginning of November. Most business would like your request written on letter head with a tax-id number. You can create letter head with your team logo, school address, the lead mentors contact information and the tax-id number. You can usually get the tax id number from your school or parent group at your school. (This is a great job for parents that want to help but cannot make it to meetings)

December

- Talk to the teacher and/or lead mentor about what food schedule they want during build season. Find out when and where they want meals for the team. Once build season begins their focus will be on helping the team so be sure to do this before the holiday break.
- Begin coordinating with parents the food schedule, Google Spreadsheets work well, everyone can see it, they can add their name, phone number and meal they will be bringing. This helps so similar meals are not repeated for three days in a row.

- Some easy inexpensive meals we have done are: potato bar (baked potatoes with several topping), pasta bar (cooked pasta with several topping), taco bar, soups, chili, pancakes, hot dogs, grilled cheese sandwiches, quesadillas, mac-n-cheese, lasagna etc.
- Some parents would rather donate money than meals, this comes in handy for essentials, snacks or when you do not have a meal scheduled.
- Find a place in the workroom (a cabinet, or a plastic bin) to store plates, utensils, napkins etc. Try to get these donated, and keep them handy so the family bringing food only has to bring food.

Build Season

- Be sure the spreadsheet is shared with the parents and have them fill in in their information. Don't be afraid to send e-mails letting parents know of any empty spots, some want to wait to see what gets filled in, then add themselves.
- Try to keep snacks stocked for the kids to grab after school. Fruit and crackers are a great choices. We buy the big boxes of goldfish and pretzels then fill snack-sized Ziploc bags, it is much cheaper than individual bags.
- Make sure there is enough food for all the members to eat. Find will stay to build and remember some kids eat a lot.
- Be sure to send an e-mail reminder to the parent volunteers a few days before they have to bring in the meal.
- Be sure there is a place available for meal set-up so the volunteers will know where to set-up the food.
- Make sure to have someone keep an eye on supplies and restock if necessary (plates, forks, knives, etc.).

Traveling to a competition

- Talk to the teacher and/or lead mentor about how they would like to do meals. For our team we always try to eat lunch as a team at a designated spot. We do this for two reasons;
 - 1) They get a nutritious meal and have time to talk about the competition.
 - 2) Everyone gets back to competition on time.
- Talk to the teacher/lead mentor about how much would they like spent per lunch? Are they collecting money from the team members or did the teacher/mentor add that into travel expenses?
- If traveling out of town search for restaurants close to your hotel, make reservations before you arrive in town. You can always cancel once you get there as long as you haven't given your credit card number.
- Before going to a competition search for places to get lunches (I will pre-order the week before arriving), warehouse super stores, grocery stores etc. You do not want to be looking for a place to get lunch the last minute, especially if you go to the Championships.
- I make sure that all the kids on the team have my cell phone number while at a competition. I also make sure the parents of the kids who are traveling have my number to contact me if they need too.
- Be sure you keep water and snacks in your pits for your pit crew and drive team. They spend most all of the day in your pit area and will need to be hydrated and nourished during their long day.

I always carry a backpack filled with the following items and keep in the stands, if they need something getting to the pit admin is not close or easy for scouts.

- band aids
- tums
- benadryl
- motrin
- tweezers
- kleenex
- neosporine
- eye drops
- feminine products
- 4 sharpies
- 3 small note pads
- pens
- extra safety glasses
- a new chapstick
- battery chargers
- an extra team shirt for boys and girls

I always pack an first-aid type bag to keep in the pit area, because at Championships your pit could be far away from the Pit Admin. In this bag I keep:

- bandages of assorted sizes
- peroxide
- cotton balls
- q-tips
- instant cold packs
- tweezers
- bag of cliff blocks
- motrin
- small note pad and pen