# The Chairman's Award Essay - OnyxTronix #2231

In OnyxTronix, we like to believe that as a team we are FIRST-ly volunteers. It may seem that FIRST is only a robotics competition, yet we know that the true FIRST spirit prompts us to promote and support our communities using technology. As a team, we strongly connect to this ideology and do our best to act upon it and spread it anywhere we can in our own special way. We know that without our community’s support we won’t be able to achieve what we have accomplished so far. Therefore we give back as much as we can. We combine our abilities as a specially skilled and a strong willed group of people in order to care for our communities - the FIRST community and our local community. ilBy shortly reciting our long history as a team, we can only mention our huge dedication to the different FIRST activities such as constant mentoring of FLL teams such as “Flash” #74, building new teams (like the team we are currently buding in Ramla) and volunteering for the different FIRST activities and competitions. In addition, we take pride in our work for our local community by spreading the FIRST spirit in different ways, such as meeting with special needs groups as well and constantly setting up booths about our team and FIRST in our community. This may sound like a lot, yet it is only the beginning.

## Yitzhak Rabin's "Flash" FLL Team Mentorship

"Flash" #74 is an FLL team in Shoham's Yitzhak Rabin elementary school, which has been active for the past 9 years. We began mentoring the team 5 years ago, and within the 5 years of mentoring this team, they have made huge progress and have managed to advance twice to international competitions (in 2011 and 2016). Our connection with “Flash” is special because some of us learned at Yitzhak Rabin, used be members in “Flash” and now we are at Onyx Tronix as teenagers. In this way the word “robotics” spreads out to the whole Shoham community. Two members of our team, Stav Hadas and Adar Gat, used to be members of “Flash”. Today, they mentor them closely with love and care, infusing them with the FIRST spirit while taking a big part in #2231. To quote Stav, “These children are like family to us, we care for them and it is our duty to help them both grow as a team and as human beings”. As you can see, these two students have become an inseparable part of "Flash" and we only wish to continue building this relationship. This is why we opt to maintain a strong relationship with #74 by supporting them and helping them with everything they need. We know it is our duty to be an active part within this team’s development, because they are the FIRST delegates of the future.

## Building Ramla's First FRC Team

This year we took on a new project by taking a significant role in building the first ever FRC team in the city of Ramla. Ramla is one of the largest mixed city in Israel, where Jews and Muslims live in co-existence. In Ramla there aren’t many informal activities involving science and technology so we decided to take action. Although it may not seem as the most likely FIRST location, we know it has great potential. We started out by welcoming them to FIRST and explaining about the FIRST spirit and goals. Later on, we invited them to visit our workshop and learn the basics and the different aspects of robotics. Nowadays, we already went through many different developing sessions and created a strong bond with the students of Ramla’s Bistritzki Ort High School of Arts and Sciences - Artists Quarter. This is a bond we are committed to and is a major catalyst for us to continue developing them. Therefore, our aim with this talented group is to assist them by building together a strong base for future work within FIRST as an independent team.

**Volunteering Within FIRST**

It is widely known that volunteering is seen as one the most important attributes of FIRST. The different volunteers within FIRST’s activities and competitions are the “fuel” on which the organisation runs on, and are crucial for FIRST on a whole other level. We greatly recognize their importance in our team, and do this by continuously sending out volunteers to the different FIRST events in our region. Throughout the FRC and FLL competitions we volunteer in different roles. Within the FRC competitions our team members and graduates frequently take part in roles such as - judges, scorekeepers, field resets and even more. With respect to FLL volunteering, our team participates in the competitions as scorekeepers, queuers, judges and many other roles that makes the competition what it is . Since 2013, we have an average of about 10 volunteers a year and each year this number increases. Our volunteers are at their best with every different volunteering activity, by working nonstop and obviously having the time of their lives with every volunteering opportunity. Towards the end of the building season, we launch our rules and regulations workshop to all FRC teams in Israel where we bring the teams up to par regarding all the rules of this year’s competition.

## Spreading FIRST

In order to reach the community with FIRST’s message, we must spread the word and the FIRST spirit. We plan and host a variety of events in our community, some of the events are open for everybody, while others are targeted for a more specific crowd. Our flagship projects include annually meeting a group of blind people towards the end of the season, with whom we work with at our workshop and demonstrate our robot. Previously, we held meetings with classes of special needs from our high school and groups that include “Merkaz Yachad”, who enjoyed an introduction about FIRST and welcoming activities to the world of robotics. Moreover, our team members who mentor the FLL team “Flash” brought those students to our workshop to show them the variety of tools and our FRC program. Spreading of FIRST for the general audience, we annually present our newly built robots to our local schools and community. Our members teach the students how to use our robot and it’s special features. We even hold a special booth in our town’s annual Sukkot festival, “The Muzot”! We don’t take our work lightly in spreading FIRST, as we were all personally affected by the work of this organisation, and we believe everyone deserves an equal opportunity to be a part of FIRST.

## Community Volunteering

As a team, we love to volunteer within our community, even for things that are not related directly. We do many things that combine developing team spirit and volunteering. During the “Sukkot” vacation we went to the “Tel Baruch” beach,a very polluted beach, and decided to help purify it by collecting 30 bags of trash. We also helped pack over 200 bags of food in preparation for “Tu Bishvat”, for the city council of “Petah Tikva” that gathers food for the needy. Together with our school’s leadership program class, we participated in “Leket Israel”, Israel’s largest national food bank that distributes surplus food to needy people. They limited us with a time frame in which we collect produce from a specific field. We were assigned a plot of orange trees and we collected as many oranges as we could for 45 minutes. The collection boxes that were weighed in at the end are enough to feed 400 families.

## Future

Although so much has been done thus far, there is still so much more we can contribute so we strive to continue and find new ideas to help our community. We plan on creating an online “FIRST for Dummies” in Hebrew (inspired by the “For Dummies” book series), which will include all the information required for new teams and even veteran teams looking for guidance. It will also cover building the team, working during the season, creating connections with other teams, mentoring, volunteering and obviously what FIRST is all about. In addition, we wish to continue increasing our support for teams in our community, with new teams constantly being created and active teams (such as us) longing for new friendships. We also want to continue doing activities about FIRST for the elementary schools in our community, so we can educate towards the FIRST spirit from a young age. These are just some of our main plans, and there are always new ideas and opportunities that keep rising, but we believe it is our duty to only expand our work and maintain what we have already built. By doing so, we fulfill our wish to be FIRST-ly volunteers.