

Dean's List Submission: Ronika Makkar (Winner GTRW 2014)

Many students in *FIRST* often join the program seeking experience within science and technology. But with the wide variety of disciplines including STEM, business and the arts, you often have the select few students who bring their experience beyond the norm. From Team 1241, THEORY6, Ronika Makkar shows that she is the ultimate *FIRST* student by not only being a great leader, but also instilling her confidence and enthusiasm into others.

Ever since her first year on Team 1241, Ronika has gained such confidence that greatly contributed to the team's success in promoting *FIRST*. Being a part of *DECA*, Ronika was able to carry business expertise to robotics. Using her excellent presentation skills, she is able to speak to sponsors in order to get their experience beyond technical applications so that the team can learn industry business practices. As a co-lead student on the business team and lead student on the awards team, Ronika spent time on coaching her peers on their presentation skills, resulting in several awards being won by the team. While thriving in the business area of the team, Ronika does not limit herself to this sector only. Often she is in the shop learning basic manufacturing skills to help with robot as well!

Her constant enthusiasm to spread *FIRST* is shown by her participation in Team 1241's Library Initiative. Not only does she excite children ages 5-12 about mechanical and controls workshops, she also showcases the value of *FIRST* robotics to parents with her presentation skills. The students are eager to meet Ronika during each lesson, because she makes them as fun as they can be. In the 2013 season, Ronika was eager to help students from Singapore team get accustomed to everything *FIRST* Robotics. Ronika was able to have one of the team members live with her during the competition, while making their stay easier and experience of *FIRST* special.

Extending outside of our local community, Ronika has been key to the spread of *FIRST* nationally as well. Becoming an ambassador for the team and for *FIRST*, she has presented to the Mississauga City Council, the school board and the staff of our school. She has also been in the media, in many newspaper articles and as a key student in our feature with Discovery Channel's Daily Planet. One of her favourite memory was when we watched our Chairman's winning moment a few weeks later, as our Chairman's video plays right at the end she can be heard echoing the final words, "changing the world".

While her time on the team, Ronika has learned the true meaning of being a mentor especially since she is now a senior student. She has ensured other students are developing and learning new skills by often asking challenging questions. This way, students have the opportunity to express their opinions and become involved in discussions. She also assigns roles and responsibilities during each meeting, making each student feel included and as if they are leaders as well. Ronika was invited to speak to Prime Minister Steven Harper to promote *FIRST* robotics. Like a true role model, she gave her spot to a younger student to give them a once in a lifetime opportunity to develop their presentation skills and feel more a part of the team. Her constant perseverance to be better has allowed her to become an exceptional leader while inspiring the development of other team members.

Stepping into Team 1241's robotics wing, Ronika learned many skills she never thought she would. However, as a team we were able to learn from her skills and expertise in business, making us significantly stronger. It is not about her impact on just THEORY6; her level of enthusiasm to better everyone around her is certainly changing the world.