

Why do a Letter Writing Campaign?

For the past four years, FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) Founder Dean Kamen has put heavy emphasis on getting more of the public involved in the program. Team 1987, The Broncobots, of Lee’s Summit, MO, has spent four seasons and over 1,100 envelopes and stamps sending letters to friends, family, newspaper editors, school board members, and government officials in an attempt to bring more publicity to the program and its goals. Team 1987 has put together this guide to letter writing to help other FIRST teams reach out to a large spectrum of people.

Choosing a Recipient

In 2007, Dean Kamen’s assigned homework was to contact government officials, asking for more support and participation for the FIRST program. Our team has continued this homework every season. The first step is thinking about the intended audience. For our team, we looked at both local and federal officials. Below is our current mailing list of government officials.

Mayor Karen Messerli - Lee’s Summit Mayor

Governor Jay Nixon - Missouri Governor

Senator Matt Bartle - District 8, Missouri Senator

Senator Claire McCaskill - United States Senator

Senator Kit Bond - United States Senator

Congressman Emanuel Cleaver, II - District 5, Missouri House Representative

President Barack Obama - United States President

Besides writing letters to our government officials, we have contacted newspapers, school board members, and other various media outlets. In the 2009 season, we implemented a new mail campaign known as Flat Mammoth. Please see our “Flat Creation Guide” resource for more information and ideas for that specific mail campaign.

Who and Why

When writing our letters, our first step is to introduce ourselves. Typically, each team member sends their own individual letter, so every letter is different. In most letters, we begin with name, grade, years on the team, and role on the team. For example, "My name is Sarah, and I'm a senior at Lee's Summit North High School. This is my second year on the FIRST Robotics team, Team 1987, The Broncobots. I am head of the Public Relations and Website teams." We continue by explaining what FIRST is about and to whom it is available. The main goal of this section is to incorporate why. Again, this usually starts something like, "FIRST, For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, is exactly what is needed in the educational system today. The program was created to promote science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in schools to get more students involved in these fields in post-secondary education and later in their careers."

What and How

To fulfill the body and the conclusion of each letter, we discuss what our purpose of writing is- to get people involved. Because our team has chosen to volunteer at the Greater Kansas City Regional every year rather than compete, we always first offer to show them around the competition. We also encourage them to volunteer for any FIRST competition, be it with Robotics, Lego League, or Tech Challenge. Next, we tell them to find more information, typically directing them to the FIRST website and our team website. The last crucial piece is to thank them for their time. Here's an example: "We would like to invite you to be our special guest and attend the Greater Kansas City Regional from March 4th through March 6th. After seeing students compete, you will be awed by the impact created by this competition. We encourage you to visit the program's website, <http://www.usfirst.org>. Thanks for your time, and please consider making the FIRST Program one of your priorities.