

# Belonging

the newsletter from the *FIRST* NC ED&I Team – June 2026

**Equity** – Treating everyone fairly, having equal opportunities and removing barriers.

**Diversity** – The way we are all different.

**Inclusion** – Creating space for everyone where differences are embraced.

## ***Outreach and Community Impact***

Outreach and community impact start with the mindset of expansion- not just in numbers, but in the connections you create with others.

Growing your reach means showing up where people already are and creating spaces where they feel seen and valued more than anything else. Through intentional events, meaningful partnerships, and consistent service, teams can move beyond visibility and into genuine influence. Giving back becomes more than a gesture; it becomes a shared experience that strengthens trust and builds lasting relationships. When done thoughtfully, outreach has the power to spark curiosity, open doors, and inspire the next generation to step forward with confidence and purpose.

Within *FIRST*, outreach is at the heart of what makes a robotics team more than just a group of builders – they are the source of inspiration. Expand your reach beyond competitions, whether it be through demos, workshops, or collaborative events that invite others to experience the excitement of innovation. Give back by mentoring younger students, hosting STEM nights, or volunteering your skills – this creates opportunities for others to see themselves in this space. These efforts don't just showcase what your team can do; they ignite curiosity and motivate others to explore, create, and lead.

Look beyond the obvious when building connections. While large corporations may seem like the natural partners, some of the most meaningful and impactful collaborations often come from local businesses, schools, libraries, and grassroots organizations that are deeply rooted in the community. Just like your team, companies and organizations have their own mission and visions – see which align with your needs and reach out. Thinking outside the box allows you to tap into unique strengths within your area – whether that's a small business willing to host an event, a community center offering space, or a local leader passionate about mentorship. By recognizing and leveraging these local assets, your team can not only fill immediate needs but also build strong relationships, strengthen community ties, and create a ripple effect of engagement, empowerment, and lasting impact that extends far beyond robotics.

In everything you choose to do, lead with passion and a genuine commitment to something greater than yourself. The most meaningful impact comes not from recognition or personal gain, but from a desire to uplift and serve the community around you. When your efforts are rooted in purpose and selflessness, they create lasting change, inspire others to do the same, and leave a legacy that reaches far beyond any single achievement.

***How do you and your team make members, coaches and mentors feel they belong? Do you have tips for other teams on how to include people and help them feel they really belong?***

Send them to [FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com](mailto:FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com)

## Holidays and Events:

June is Pride Month — Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Pride Month was established to recognize the impact that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals have had on the world. LGBTQ+ groups celebrate this time with Pride parades, picnics, parties, memorials for those lost to hate crimes and HIV/AIDS, and other group gatherings.

June is also Immigrant Heritage Month. It was established in June 2014 and gives people across the United States an opportunity to explore their heritages and celebrate the shared diversity that forms the unique story of the United States. June celebrates immigrants across the United States and their contributions to their local communities and economy.

**June 1:** Global Day of Parents - A day to recognize the role of parents and caregivers in supporting young people, families, and communities.

**June 1:** National Say Something Nice Day - A fun reminder that kindness is one of the simplest ways to build belonging.

**June 2:** Native American Citizenship Day commemorates the day in 1924 when the US Congress passed legislation recognizing the citizenship of Native Americans.

**June 3:** World Bicycle Day - Celebrates sustainable transportation, health, and access to movement.

**June 5:** World Environment Day - A global day to encourage awareness and action for protecting the environment.

**June 5:** National Donut Day - A lighthearted excuse to appreciate teammates, mentors, volunteers, or community partners with a sweet treat.

**June 6:** D-Day Anniversary - Marks the Allied landings in Normandy during World War II and offers a moment to reflect on service, sacrifice, and history.

**June 12:** Feast of the Most Sacred Heart is a solemnity in the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church.

**June 14:** Flag Day in the United States is observed to celebrate the history and symbolism of the US flag.

**June 16:** The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev is observed by members of the Sikh faith. Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Sikh guru and the first Sikh martyr.

**June 18:** Go Fishing Day - A playful reminder to “cast a wider net” when reaching out to new community partners, sponsors, and students.

**June 19:** Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, was established as a federal holiday in 2022. This celebration honors the day in 1865 when slaves in Texas and Louisiana finally heard they were free, two months after the end of the Civil War.

**June 21:** Summer Solstice - The longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and a fun seasonal marker for summer outreach, camps, and community events.

**June 21:** National Indigenous Peoples Day, or First Nations Day, gives recognition to the indigenous populations affected by colonization in Canada.

**June 21:** Father’s Day - A day to recognize fathers, father figures, mentors, and caregivers who support young people.

**June 28:** The last Sunday in June is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) Pride Day in the United States. It commemorates the Stonewall Riots that occurred on June 28th, 1969.

**June 29:** Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul is a liturgical feast in honor of the martyrdom in Rome for the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul in Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

If you spot an error in the newsletter please email us at: [FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com](mailto:FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com)

## Inspiration & Recognition Spotlight: *Dr. Sian Proctor*



Dr. Sian Proctor is a geoscientist, educator, astronaut, artist, and science communicator whose work shows how powerful outreach can be when it invites others to see themselves in STEM.

As a longtime professor and public advocate for science education, she has used storytelling, creativity, and exploration to make space and science more accessible to students and communities. Her career reminds us that impact grows when we share our passion with others, open doors, and help the next generation believe they belong in the future they are helping to build.

She believes that when we solve for space, we also solve issues on Earth. She was the mission pilot for SpaceX Inspiration4, the first all-civilian orbital mission. She is the first African American woman to pilot a spacecraft and the first African American commercial astronaut. She is also one of The Explorer's Club 50: Fifty People Changing the World.

Read more of Dr. Sian Proctor - [HERE](#)

## ED&I and YPP Training: *Represent Your Whole Community*

When planning outreach, publicity, and social media, take a thoughtful look at who is being represented. Do the photos, stories, and examples you share reflect the diversity of your team, school, and wider community?

Representation matters because people are more likely to feel welcome when they can see themselves included. This means thinking beyond the most visible aspects of diversity, such as race and gender, and also considering age, ability, language, culture, economic background, learning style, personality, and different levels of experience or confidence.

As your team promotes events, creates brochures, posts on social media, or visits community spaces, be intentional about showing a broad and authentic picture of who belongs in STEM. Avoid always highlighting the same few students or the same types of roles. Feature builders, programmers, presenters, designers, outreach students, safety leads, business team members, new students, quiet contributors, mentors, and community partners.

Outreach is not just about showing what your team can do — it is about helping others imagine that they belong too. A more inclusive public face can open the door for someone who may be wondering, “Is there a place for me here?”

The *FIRST* NC ED&I Team: Contact us at: [FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com](mailto:FIRSTNC-EDI@googlegroups.com)

We are a team of coaches/mentors who want to help create a community and culture of people who embrace the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion, who want to develop themselves, and who understand that growth and diversity of all types lead to team excellence.

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All Editions are Available Online at: <https://www.firstnorthcarolina.org/belonging-newsletter>