

**Team 2486 “The CocoNuts” Present**  
**An Epic Chairman’s Award “Tail”**  
**The Way of the Squirrel**

*Once upon a time, in the land of Flagstaff, there lived a dynamic robotics team known as the CocoNuts. They heard a legend of a wise guru who lived at the top of Mt. Humphreys. They decided to seek the guru, for they desired to learn from him the ways of Gracious Professionalism. So they set out on a team bonding day to the top of the peaks.*

*The journey was treacherous & fraught with peril & hardship. But the CocoNuts persevered & ascended to the top!*

*The guru was bushy of tail, keen of ear & had a twinkle in his eye. He greets the team with joy & jokes & agrees to share with the CocoNuts his abounding wisdom.*

***Build Your Nest on the Highest Branch***

*“One should always strive to reach for the highest branch, be proud of the nest they’ve built, & display it for all to see.”*

We wave our flag high at every competition & take exceptional pride in our work on the robot. We never use duct tape! Each component of the robot is precise & never out of place. There is never a stray wire or a sharp edge. Our electronics board is unique because it’s an illuminated & engraved piece of Plexiglas. Our decorations are classic & one-of-a-kind. (Remember the horn from last year?) We always measure 7 times, check with Mr. Thompson twice, & cut once. We set high goals & work together to maintain high-caliber craftsmanship.

The Master nods in agreement.

***There’s No Such Thing as a Bad Nut***

*“An individual’s differences only make a team member more valuable. Remember it’s what’s on the inside that counts.”*

The CocoNuts are exceptionally diverse in many ways: we speak 15 languages & have an incredible range of ethnic backgrounds. All high school levels are represented. We are always respectful & considerate of each other’s ideas. Our team is like an alloy: each component makes it stronger. Our team provides a safe haven for those who would otherwise be negatively stereotyped.

The Master twitches his tufted ears & smiles.

***Don’t Hoard Your Nuts***

*“The most valued squirrel is the one who looks out for his Scurry.”*

Each of our team members looks out for everyone else on the team. We always make sure to take care of each other by insuring that everyone is fed during build days & that no one is struggling with a problem. We make sure everyone has transportation to & from the school, which is no small feat since many of our team members live in a rural area outside the city.

The Master graciously accepts a nut from a young CocoNut.

### ***No Idea is Too Nutty***

*“Just like an acorn, no idea can be too nutty.”*

When we brainstorm, our ideas build off each other. Our team’s diversity leads to a huge array of thoughts, which we try to incorporate into our final product. It’s the improbable ideas that add fresh creativity into our thought process. Some of our out-of-the-box ideas include putting “bloomers” on our bumpers & adding a “signal to pass” horn on last year’s bot.

The Master nibbles on the nut.

### ***Look to Your Elder Squirrels for Guidance***

*“Learn well from your elders, for they have gathered many nuts on the path that lies before you.”*

Our coaches are not just our teachers or mentors; they’ve become our lifelong friends. It’s easy to be yourself around them. They’ve inspired us to shoot for the moon & beyond. Some of us have been influenced to go into the same field of study as they teach. They’ve taught us so many things ranging from what tool is best for a certain task to putting your heart & mind into everything you do. We’ve learned to remain calm under stress & to be who we are. Through our experiences with our mentors, we’re now prepared & comfortable to lead others. A tremendous amount of insight & enthusiasm has been contributed by our dedicated community/business mentors.

The Master winks at the mentors who helped the CocoNuts.

### ***Fluff the Tail for Good Luck***

*“Fluff your tail for good luck. No tradition is too weird as long as it’s yours.”*

If the CocoNuts could be summed up in one word, it would be “eccentric.” Our team name comes from our mascot, Rocky the Squirrel, who resides in the chilliest part of the science dept. Our name is a combination of our school name “Coconino” & the tasty treat of our beloved mascot & team mentality “Nuts.” From celebrating our squirreliness by fluffing a squirrel tail for good luck to running amok with our bright red flag, we flaunt our Nutty mentality.

Though we’re not the largest team, we’re one of the most exuberant! Since we’re small, instead of having specialized positions, each team member gets to have their hand in every part of our robot & team modus operandi.

The Master admires his freshly fluffed tail.

### ***Share Your Nuts with the World***

*“Celebrate with your community the fruits of your labors. Let the world see what great things you have accomplished.”*

In the span of 6 months, our team has established an influential relationship with our community. We have spread the word of FIRST to hundreds of people, young & old & have now gained name recognition in our area.

We began with the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade where we tooted our horn & hoisted our flag high for all to see! Then, each member of our team put in dozens of hours at the Coconino County Fair—demonstrating, educating, & inspiring youth & parents alike. This was the first seed we planted that led to the explosion of enthusiasm for FIRST in N. Arizona. Within our school, we’ve been a part of pep assemblies & the homecoming parade. During the annual Flagstaff Festival of Science, our team made two appearances at Science in the Park & NAU’s Science & Engineering Day. We put our robot on a bus & took it to the Phoenix for a demonstration at ASU.

The CocoNuts have been recognized in the local media on our local TV station, five times in our local newspaper, on-air radio announcements & banners. The superintendent of schools has praised our efforts on his personal blog, & we regularly appear in our school's newsletter.

We are partnering with NAU to create a professional HD documentary chronicling our team's journey this season. We've unveiled our team's brand new website & blog, & will soon premier our podcast & newsletter.

The Master logs on to the new CocoNuts website & exclaims his love of blogging!

### ***Spread Squirreldom to the Community***

*"A motivated squirrel leaves an impact on his community."*

The CocoNuts are the catalyst of change in the way Flagstaff perceives science & technology. FIRST is playing an integral role in the district-wide initiative to bring quality STEM education to students from Pre-K through post-graduate programs. We are mentored by university students, & we in turn mentor middle & elementary school students. The key to transforming students into our future scientists, engineers & teachers is to get them excited at an early age.

The Master applauds the implementation of STEM education!

### ***Guide Younger Squirrels to Find Their Nuts***

*"The young squirrels are our future. Teach them to take up the banner & carry it with pride."*

This year we hosted the first annual Northern Arizona FLL Regional Tournament! The CocoNuts were vital in starting & sustaining 16 new FLL teams in Flagstaff. Our team contacted the coaches & teachers at each school & helped get their team off the ground. Each CocoNut devoted hours of their own time to establish contacts & to mentor, teach & kindle the creativity of the new generation of robot fanatics. We each developed a unique rapport with the teams in our care. We took the time to develop a sense of teamwork & camaraderie. The team leaders not only became mentors, but friends to their younger Nuts. One CocoNut was the recipient of the prestigious Adult Mentor Award!

We saw amazing growth in our teams. They gained the self confidence to contact professionals in the community & abroad & took charge & ownership of their task at hand. They learned to set priorities & goals & to manage their time, all the while gaining a deeper understanding of the environmental issues in Flagstaff.

We also saw an awesome change in the teachers & parents who volunteered their time to be FLL coaches. At first, our coaches were reluctant & unsure of taking on something so new & different. With the help of the CocoNuts, the coaches gained confidence & were able to get excited & see the value in robotics. The new coaches are all eager to start a new season!

Our efforts created the most new FLL teams in one region in FIRST history! But more importantly, we inspired over 200 kids to enjoy exploring science & engineering. Suddenly the parents & the community had their eyes opened to the wonders & benefits of robotics. We learned as much from their excitement & enthusiasm as they did from our experience & expertise.

The Master discreetly sniffed & wiped a tear from his eye.

***Always Channel Your Energy in Positive Ways***

*“Make sure everything you do has a positive impact.”*

The CocoNuts have worked hard to become positive role models in our school & community. We did a huge amount of work organizing & running the Northern Arizona FLL Tournament in its 1<sup>st</sup> year. We had a whopping 21 teams compete! Our excitement is contagious; we influence each other to do our best & have a positive attitude no matter what. If the CocoNuts were able to do so much in less than a year, think of what we can do in the future!

The Master rose from his full lotus to levitate, grinning happily!

*“What have you learned from your journey as a team?”*

*The CocoNuts looked at each other & realized that in choosing to take the journey, they had achieved their goal of becoming Gracious Professionals. They turned to the Squirrel Master. “You knew all along, didn’t you?”*

*“Yes, my faithful CocoNuts. You already are a fantastic team that has truly embodied FIRST by walking the Way of the Squirrel. Now, go forth, share what you have learned with the world, & **GO CocoNUTS!**”*



## 2009 Chairman's Award Executive Summary Questions

1. *Briefly describe the impact of the FIRST program on team participants with special emphasis on this year and the preceding two years.*
  - 2009 is our 2<sup>nd</sup> year in FIRST.
  - CocoNuts began with mostly freshmen with sustainability in mind.
  - Our FRC team mentors the FTC team.
  - Our first senior member will graduate this year with scholarships to a University of his Choice!
  - FIRST has opened our eyes to the world of engineering and technology and how they are integrated with science.
  - The vast majority of our team members are already considering majoring in science or engineering, even though they won't graduate for two years.
2. *Examples of role model characteristics for other teams to emulate.*
  - Commitment to FIRST and to excellence.
  - Professional speaking skills and outstanding relationships with the community.
  - Non-judgmental acceptance of diverse team members.
  - Magnitude of accomplishments in proportion to the size and experience of the team.
  - Selfless attitude toward the team and our community.
  - Student mentorship of 16 new FLL teams in 13 schools.
  - Organization and management of the 1<sup>st</sup> ever Northern Arizona FLL Regional.
  - Our sense of humor!
  - ENTHUSIASM!
3. *Describe the impact of the FIRST program on your team and community with special emphasis on this year and the preceding two years.*
  - 16 brand new FLL teams in Flagstaff this first year alone. We expect this number to double next year.
  - Over 200 students attending the Northern Arizona FLL Regional.
  - 80+ tournament volunteers from NAU and the Flagstaff community.
  - 6 rookie Flagstaff FLL teams qualifying for the AZ State Tournament.
  - Student-initiated community outreach efforts.
  - Name recognition in the community and among other FIRST teams.
  - Numerous partnerships and mentors from the community.
4. *Team's innovative methods to spread the FIRST message.*

Community Outreach

  - Flagstaff 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade
  - Flagstaff Festival of Science: Science in the Park
  - NAU Science & Engineering Day
  - CHS Pep Assembly
  - CHS Homecoming Parade
  - Coconino County Fair
  - ASU RoboTech Conference

## Media

- 5 stories 14 months: Arizona Daily Sun
- TV appearance: “People to Know”
- Flagstaff Unified School District “Superintendent’s Corner” blog
- Team Website, Blog, forum
- Professional HD documentary
- FLL Tournament Banners
- Radio announcements

5. *Describe the strength of your partnership with special emphasis on this year and the preceding two years.*

- FUSD sponsored 16 new FLL teams in 13 schools.
- Next season FLL will be in all public and charter schools.
- Our FLL influence has reached communities of Kingman, Sedona, Verde Valley, Prescott and Winslow.
- FLL will expand to Page & Navajo & Hopi reservations.
- Mentorship with Boeing, despite the 150 miles between us.
- Partnerships w/ Southwest Windpower & City of Flagstaff began with our demo booth at the N. AZ FLL Tournament.
- 10 local tournament sponsors; more added each day.

6. *Team's communication methods and results.*

- Presentations to businesses, service organizations & schools.
- Demos at community events: hundreds of people reached from Prescott to Page.
- We approach businesses in a friendly and personal manner. We have a positive relationship with these businesses and they are well represented by the team.
- Face-to-face workshops for FLL coaches and volunteers.
- Constant phone, email and personal contact with FLL teams.
- Our FLL teams gained the self-confidence to be self-sufficient.

7. *Other matters of interest to the FIRST judges, if any.*

- Flagstaff is a rural community 2 hours from the nearest big city.
- The CocoNuts are the driving force in FUSD Pre-K to 20 STEM education initiatives.
- Huge diversity on team & school; 15 languages represented.
- Judge’s Award at 2008 AZ FRC.
- Inspire Award at 2007 AZ FTC; World Championship attendance in our rookie year.
- Professional HD documentary sponsored by NAU will be commercially distributed.
- The CocoNuts have made a huge impact in a short time with a very small, new team.