

# **BOT FRIENDS FOREVER**

**AN ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY REPORT FOR**



**NICHOLAS TOURVILLE**



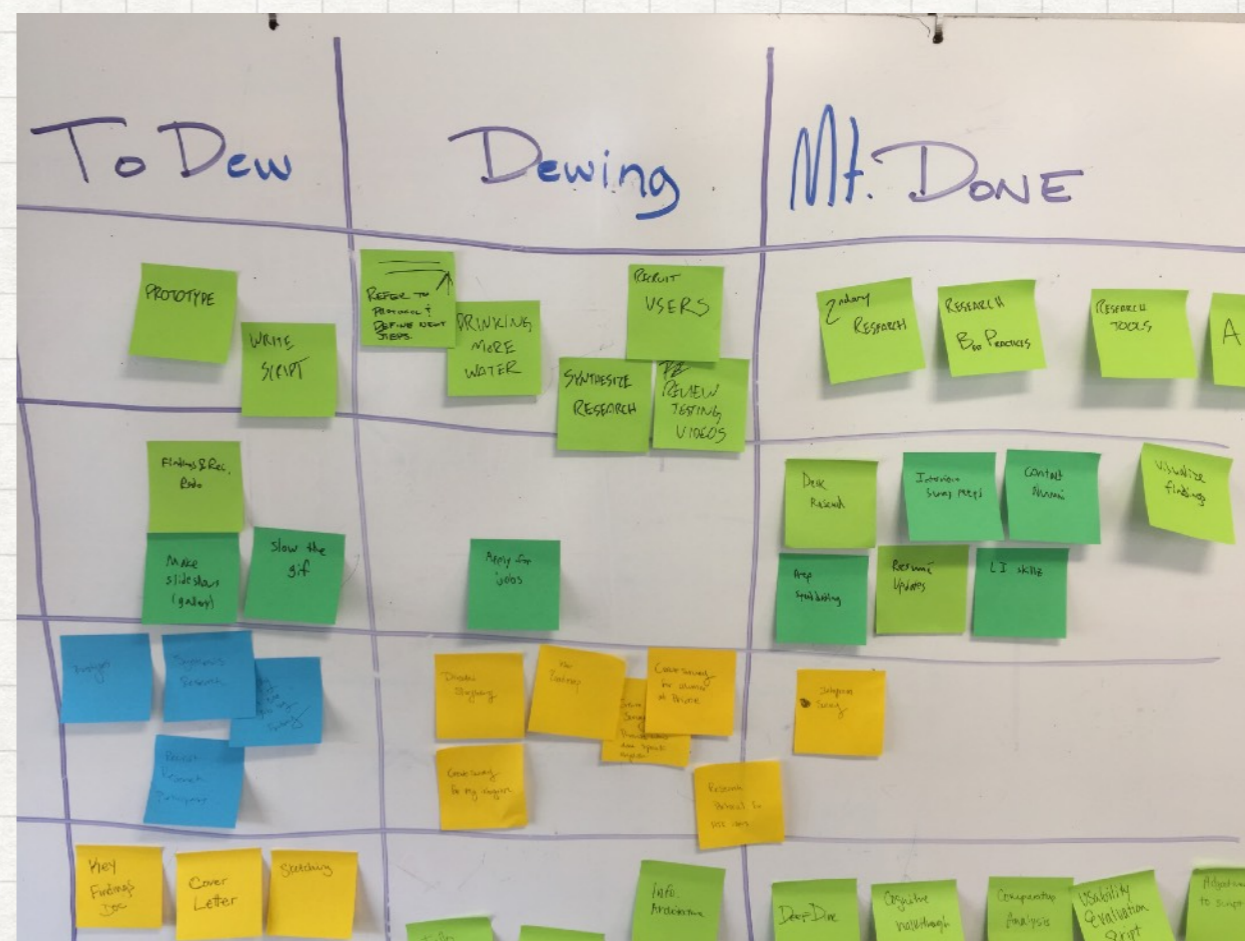
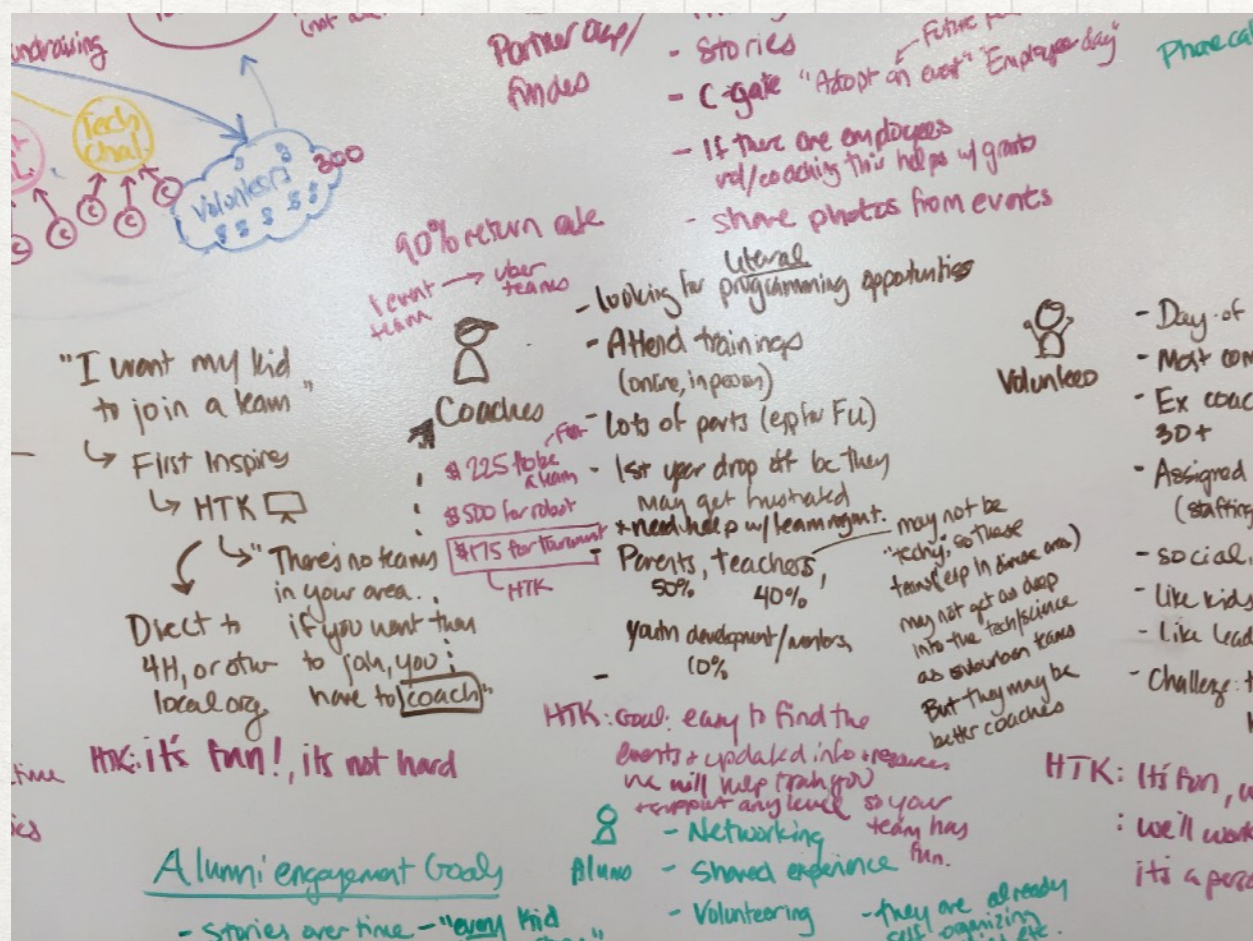
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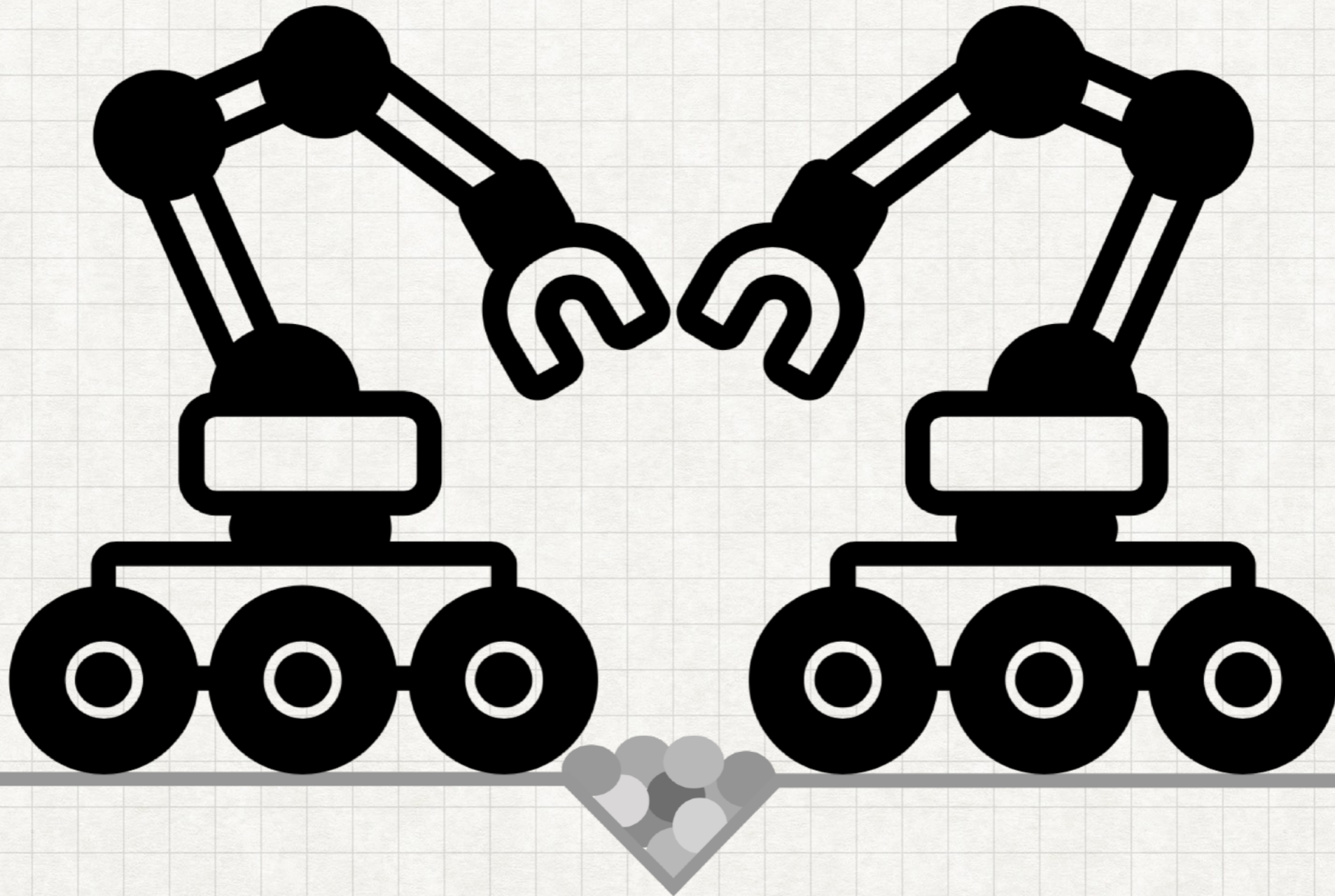
# METHODOLOGY

My research started with the kickoff meeting, which provided a nice framework for how to proceed. My secondary research included a review of the website analytics, along with a review of the High Tech Kids and FIRST websites, and existing surveys. Competitor analysis focused on Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and the National Speech and Debate Association, and uncovered many evidence-based strategies. I made surveys about extracurricular activities to better understand supporter motivations, and followed them up with interviews. Once I had prototypes to work with, I tested them with a speed dating survey, desirability testing, and evaluative interviews. I also used a love letter / breakup letter test to evaluate my subgoal hypotheses.





# Bot Friends Forever





## Bot Friends Forever



### Reinforce Social Connections

Relationships keep supporters engaged. We care more about the people we know, and volunteers like to see their friends at tournaments.



### Create Lasting Memories

High Tech Kids memories shaped the lives of many of the alumni supporters I talked to and kept them engaged. Alumni want to give back to organizations that they have fond memories of.



### Help Supporters Feel the Impact of their Support

Supporters want to feel like they're making a difference. Alumni supporters I talked to took pride in the effects of their support, and were motivated by them.



### Encourage Role Model Relationships

Role models who support High Tech Kids inspire kids to find ways to support High Tech Kids. Alumni supporters took pride in becoming the kinds of people they looked up to as kids.



Grades K-5

Grades 5-12

College

Back Home

STEM Field Trips

Adult  
Tournament

Coach  
Pairing &  
Remote  
Mentoring

Winter & Summer  
Get-Togethers

ENGAGEMENT WITH HIGH TECH KIDS

The tactics in black address key points in the journey of High Tech Kids alumni.

Grades K-5: There is a significant drop-off in engagement after grade 5 as students need to make more of an effort to find a team. STEM Field trips excite students in the off-season and connect them with nearby teams, increasing the chance that they stay engaged.

Grades 5-12: There is another drop-off in engagement after grade 12 as students age out of the program and move away for college. Adult Tournaments get kids into the habit of serving as a volunteer before they graduate.

College: Distant college students do not have many options for staying engaged. Remote mentoring opportunities combined with a coach pairing program help students stay engaged in the program with minimal time commitments.

Back Home: Whether they are visiting over winter/summer break or moving back home for good, the time alumni spend back home in Minnesota presents an opportunity area for engagement. Biannual meetups scheduled over winter and summer breaks help alumni stay engaged.



## STEM FIELD TRIPS

**Field trips arranged by coaches played an important role in the engagement of alumni I talked to. I recommend that HTK facilitate field trips for students from all teams.**



Field trips connect their participants. Kids go on an adventure together and feel closer as a result. They can connect with teammates but also students from different teams. This creates a lasting community that can motivate kids to stay engaged.



Field trips create shared memories anchored to locations and activities. Every time a student passes the Science Museum or thinks of hot air balloons, they can fondly remember a corresponding field trip they participated in through High Tech Kids.



Seeing the excitement in kids' faces provides immediate feedback for field trip chaperones. In addition, chaperones can reminisce with students at tournaments to get a deeper feeling of having an impact. Taking kids on STEM field trips could provide a great gateway to helping out at HTK tournaments.



Field trips provide opportunities for kids to find STEM role models, whether those are their chaperones or some of the people on location. These role model relationships shape kids' identities and make them more likely to contribute to STEM programs like HTK as supporters.



# STEM FIELD TRIPS

I incorporated a sample field trip to iFLY into the existing calendar pages.

Clickable prototype available [here](https://xd.adobe.com/view/e8f632fb-7469-4d6e-7993-9687ff797e5a-9ec7/):

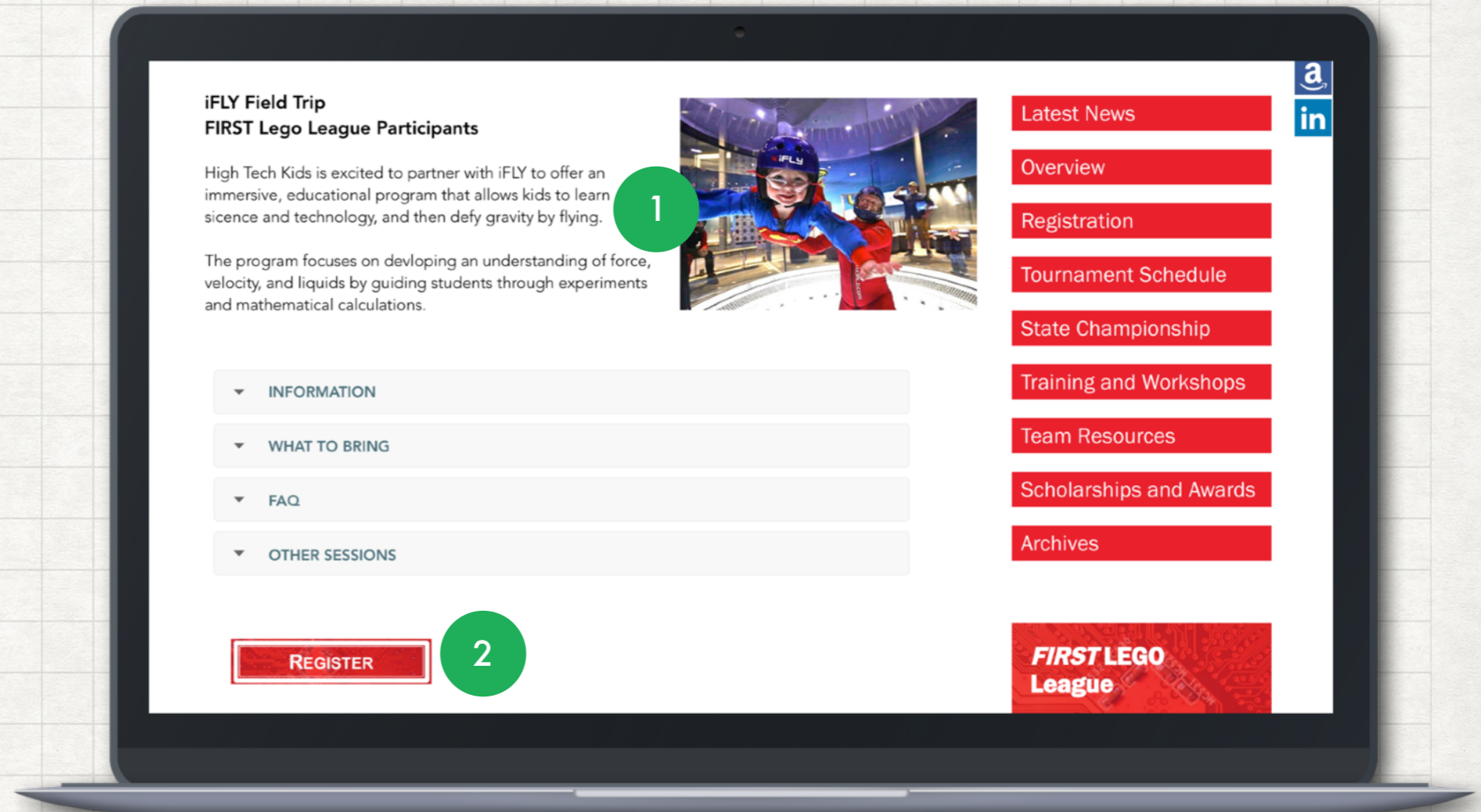
<https://xd.adobe.com/view/e8f632fb-7469-4d6e-7993-9687ff797e5a-9ec7/>

1

iFLY provides a fun opportunity to fly in a wind tunnel and teaches several STEM topics relevant to building robots

2

The 'Register' button was moved out of the drop down to make the call for action more visible. I would recommend combining making the call to action more clear on the second page of the prototype as well.





# STEM FIELD TRIPS

Field trips can be featured on social media like in the Tweets below.

1

Posts about upcoming field trips like this trip to the Science Museum of Minnesota can recruit participants and provide interesting material for readers.

2

Posts about past field trips like this trip to see the Saint Paul Saints demonstrate STEM concepts show how much fun kids had and take advantage of people's fear of missing out.





## Implementation Strategies

### Short Term (First Year)

Start with a couple events for FLL Jr kids. Possible destinations include museums (The Bakken, The Works), recreational facilities (roller rinks, sports team lessons), and lab visits (UofM, company sponsors). Track social media metrics like views and likes, and track which teams participants are coming from.

### Medium Term (Second to Fifth Year)

Offer field trips for all HTK participants, and note which kinds of trips get the most traction. Evaluate whether the 5th grade drop-off has been affected by the field trips, and whether former field trip participants are any more likely to stay engaged after aging out of HTK.

### Long Term (Fifth Year Plus)

Offer more extravagant field trips like road trips to Chicago and tours of Europe. Most field trips should remain affordable, but bigger trips create stronger memories. Consider finding sponsorships for these trips and/or offering them as a reward for outreach efforts.



## HIGH TECH ADULTS TOURNAMENT

**The most engaged alumni started volunteering while they were young. I recommend hosting a tournament with adult participants and kid volunteers.**



Switching roles helps both kids and adults meet new people and form unique connections. It also helps them relate to each other moving forward. Alumni supporters often commented on being surprised by the amount of work required to run a tournament after trying volunteering.



Alumni evaluations suggested that an adult tournament would be “hilarious” and “fun”. It would be sure to create some memorable experiences that participants and spectators could bond over.



Kids will have a better appreciation of the impact of support for HTK if they see things from the other side, and they are likely to express this to supporters.



Presenting adult participants introduces kids to potential role models. They can also find role models in their new volunteer roles.

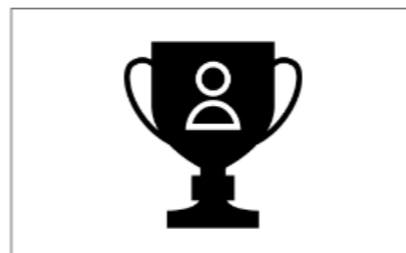


# HIGH TECH ADULTS TOURNAMENT

This story board shows how an adult tournament could help engage alumni.



Jon coaches his daughter's FLL team and wants to start a FTC team when she is old enough. He thinks he will feel more confident and be able to ask better questions if he has some experience making FTC robots. So he excitedly signs up when he hears about the High Tech Adults tournament.



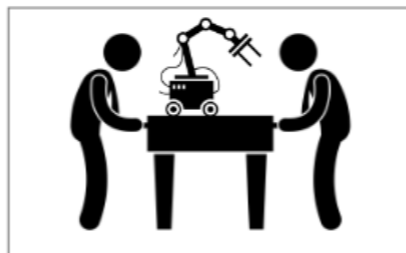
Jess is an FTC alum who won state and has missed being able to build her own robots. She has kept in contact with a former teammate Sue who volunteers for HTK, and she has been intending to get back into the activity, but it never feels like the right time. When Sue suggested she sign up for the High Tech Adults tournament, she jumped at the opportunity.



Joe is an engineer who has been involved with High Tech Kids for over 15 years, and everyone knows him. He agreed to participate in the High Tech Adults tournament when fellow volunteers suggested he do so. They know it would be a lot of fun to see a legend like Joe compete in the pit.



They form a team, "The Triple J's" and meet on the weekends to build a robot. Jon learns about building robots. Jess loves getting back at it and finds she missed HTK more than she realized. Joe enjoys mentoring Jon on robot building and mentoring Jess on how to stay involved with HTK while juggling other responsibilities.



The High Tech Adults tournament takes place during the semi-finals and finals of a normal HTK tournament. Some kids signed up for the various volunteer roles ahead of time — judge, referee, emcee, robot inspector, field staff, and scorekeeper. They are supplemented with a few experienced adults to guide them in their roles, and an "audience delegate" who polls the audience and judges based on their will.



The emcee does a great job introducing The Triple J's, and their stories inspire the audience. The competition consists of silly tasks like activating a whoopee cushion then quickly hiding it in a box, so everyone laughs a lot. It's a great way to decompress after a busy day.



At the closing ceremony, the kid volunteers are honored, and the speaker emphasizes the need for kids like them to stay involved with the activity. The kids have a ton of fun wielding their newfound power over adults, and most of them ask if they can volunteer again.



Jon bring the knowledge he gained from competing home, and becomes a great FTC coach.



Jess is super excited to be back in the activity and signs up to volunteer at the next tournament. She wants to try coaching a team next year.



Joe had a lot of fun competing in the tournament. Several kids came up and asked him about his team's robot after the last match, and he enjoyed telling them about his process. Now they say "Hi" to him whenever they see him at tournaments, and think of him as a role model.



## Implementation Strategies

### Concurrent versus Stand-Alone Tournament

Research suggested that an informal adult tournament could be held during the final rounds of an existing HTK tournament, but that a more serious adult tournament should be a stand-alone tournament. I recommend starting with an informal concurrent tournament, and only considering a stand-alone tournament if it really takes off.

### Mentor Matches

Late in my research, I found that Indiana Robotics Invitational (IRA) holds Mentor Matches. I didn't have time to talk to anyone affiliated with the program before preparing this report, but it would be worth consulting them on how to run a successful tournament for adults. See <http://indianaroboticsinvitational.org>

### Recruiting Adult Participants

I suggest seeking out participants on social media and encouraging supporters to share the call with former teammates. This could be a great tool for getting in touch with people HTK has lost contact with.

### Tracking Engagement

I recommend keeping track of which kids participated as volunteers, and determining whether and how much more likely they are to come back as HTK supporters after aging out of the program.



## COACH PAIRING & REMOTE MENTORING

I found that the most engaged alumni had exceptional coaches, and that many FIRST alumni stayed engaged while out of state by mentoring teams remotely. I recommend implementing a coach pairing system to improve coaching, and implementing a corresponding remote mentoring program to help distant alumni stay connected.



Pairing coaches creates a direct connection between them, and also connects their teams. Remote mentoring helps distant alumni retain or develop new connections to the teams they mentor.



Improving the quality of coaching creates more impactful memories for students. Remote mentoring keeps memories of HTK fresh.

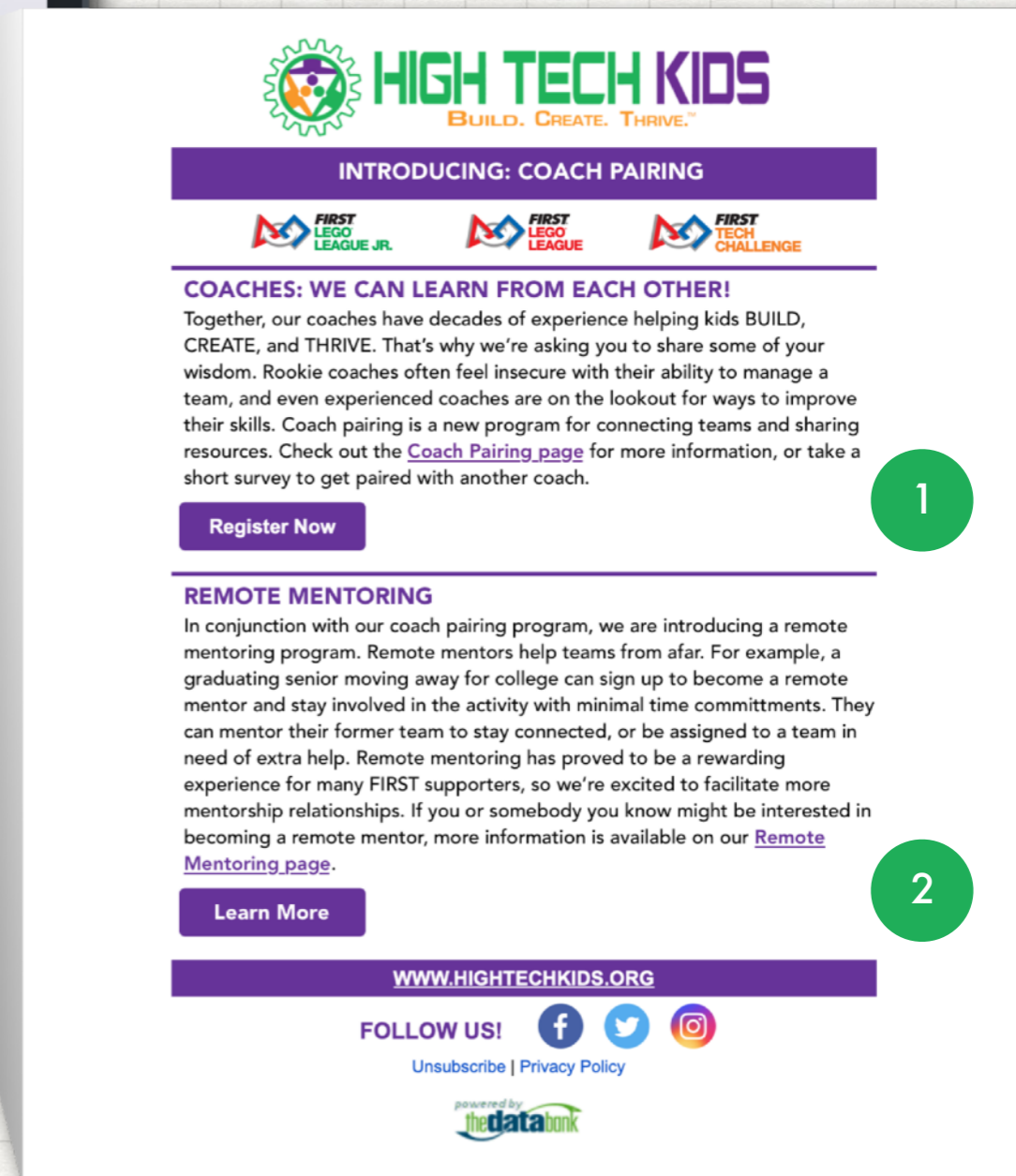
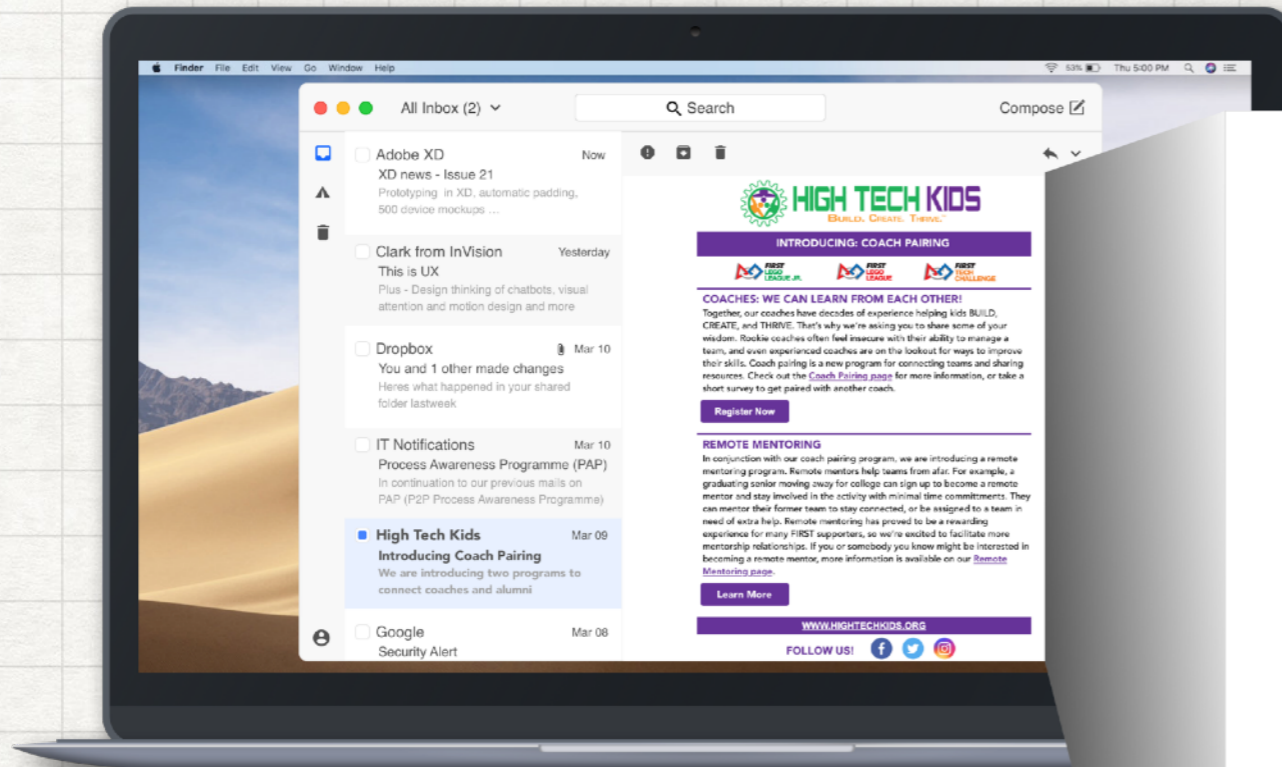


Paired coaches can become each other's role models, and remote mentors can become role models.



# COACH PAIRING & REMOTE MENTORING

The email below explains the new programs to supporters and suggests that they sign up.



1 The survey would ask about their experience coaching and about what they hope to get out of the program, so that they can be matched accordingly.

2 Coaches should be encouraged to send remote mentoring information to their graduating seniors.



# COACH PAIRING & REMOTE MENTORING

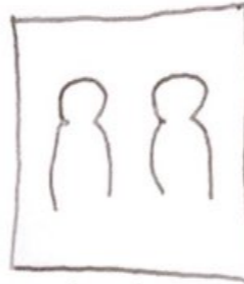
This story board shows how remote mentoring could keep alumni engaged.



Coach Kyle read about a new coach pairing program and thinks it would be a great opportunity for his student Elisa.



Elisa is going to college in Wisconsin and is sad that she can't volunteer at HTK events.



Coach Kyle tells her about the program and suggests that she becomes a remote mentor for a Minneapolis team that needs help.



Elisa is busy with college, but she finds time to mentor for two hours every Sunday.



Her mentees learn a lot from Elisa, and start to look up to her as a role model.



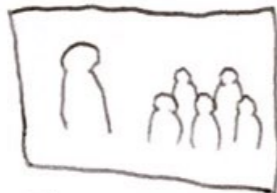
Their main coach learns from Elisa too, and has the opportunity to focus more on organization and logistics. She is a busy teacher and she was having a hard time juggling all of her coaching responsibilities.



Elisa feels great giving back to a program that gave her so much, and she is starting to feel that she is becoming ~~one~~ one of the heroes she looked up to in the program.



Elisa tells her friends about her remote mentoring sessions and finds out that one of them is a FIRST alum as well! They connect over their shared experiences and Elisa suggests that he start remote mentoring as well.



Elisa visits home over winter break and goes to a HTK tournament to finally meet her team in person!



Elisa loves mentoring so much that she decides to mentor two teams next season.



When Elisa moves back home after college, she starts coaching in person.



When her students graduate, she suggests that they try remote mentoring since it was a great way for her to stay involved in the activity.



# Implementation Strategies

### Twin Programs

Implementing the programs at the same time is helpful because remote mentors can be assigned to coach pairs in need of extra help. Coach pairing and remote mentoring go hand-in-hand because they are both about providing extra support for teams and sharing resources.

### Metrics to Track

The number of requests for coach pairings should be tracked to get a sense of growth, and team success metrics (awards, number of tournaments attended, size of team) should be tracked to monitor coach improvement. The long-term engagement of alumni who have and have not participated in remote mentoring should be tracked to assess how the program impacts their engagement.



## WINTER AND SUMMER GET-TOGETHERS

College students make up an important group of alumni, and they are most available over winter and summer breaks. I recommend scheduling get-togethers over these breaks.



Get-togethers provide many opportunities for connecting, both personally and professionally. Contact information can be collected through the registration process to better facilitate further connections.



Coming together with old friends would help alumni relive old memories, and meeting new people would help them form new memories.



The get-togethers can feature short speeches on the need for more HTK supporters, and the impact of current supporters.



Inspirational stories at get-togethers can create new role-model relationships.



# WINTER AND SUMMER GET-TOGETHERS

Programs like the ones below could be handed out at the get-togethers

1

Emphasizing that it is a recurring event helps to create a tradition of attending it.

2

Communicating the need for supporters is important. I found that some supporters were not aware of the need for more volunteers and would have brought friends to tournaments if they were aware.

3

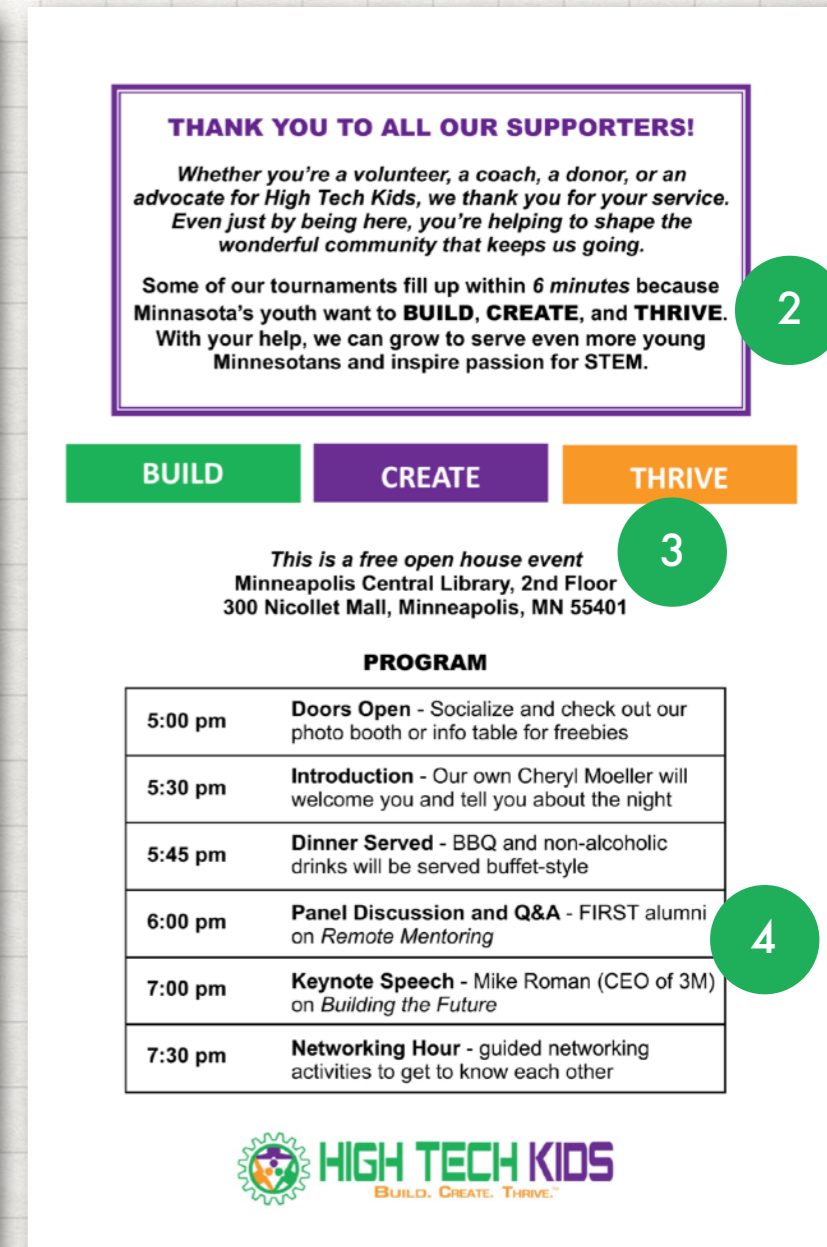
Making it an open house event reduces the pressure to stay throughout, but having a schedule makes it likely that people will stay anyways.

4

The schedule offers opportunities to show off new programs and honor key sponsors.



FRONT



BACK



# WINTER AND SUMMER GET-TOGETHERS

The get-togethers can be promoted on social media, as in the Facebook post below.

1

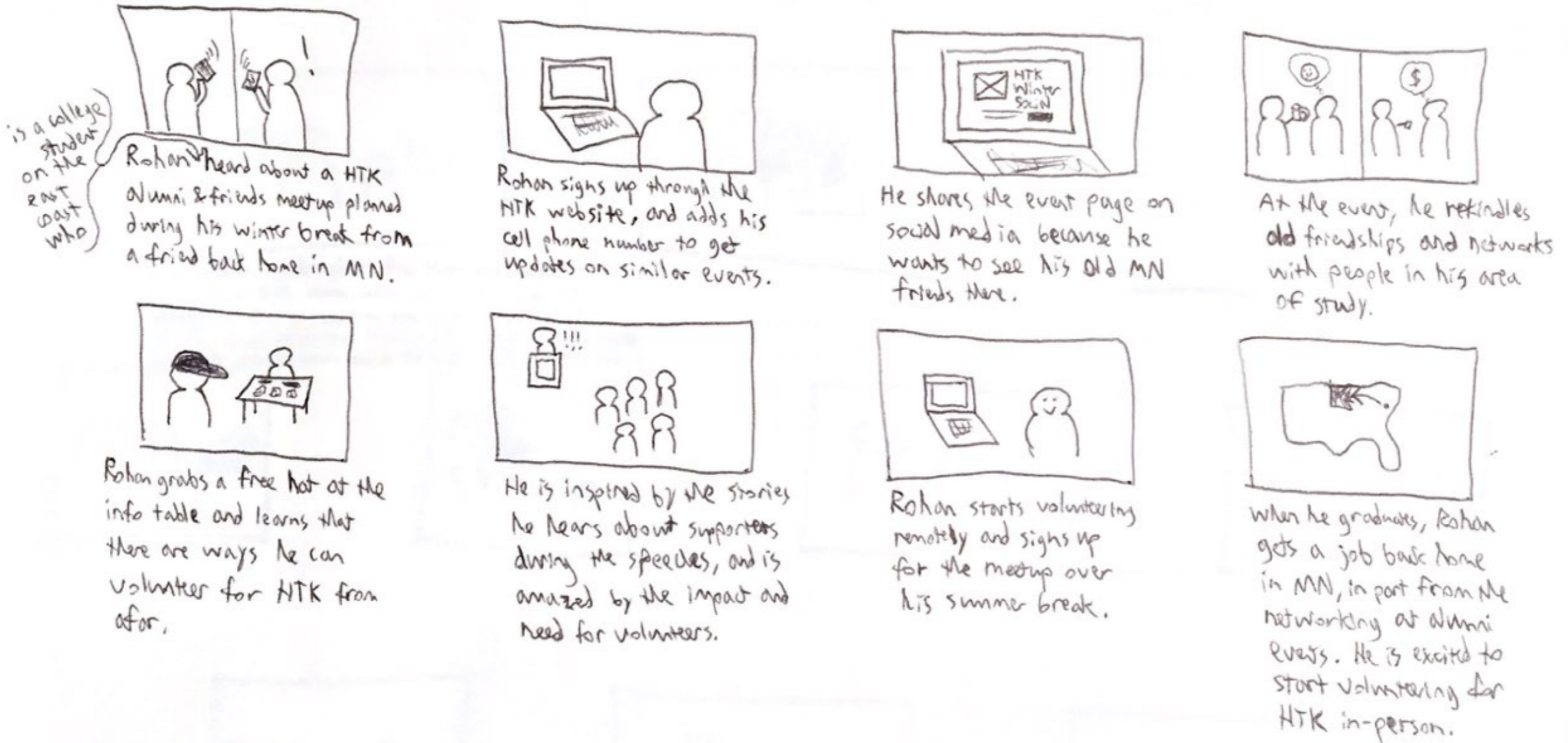
Having an outdoor event like a barbecue with an indoor backup option could be a good choice to differentiate the summer get-together from the winter get-together.





# WINTER AND SUMMER GET-TOGETHERS

This storyboard shows how a winter get-together could promote alumni engagement.





## Implementation Strategies

### Attendance

Attendance should be a good indicator of the success of the program. Given that it is open to a wider range of people than the end-of-the-year volunteer thank-you event, exceeding the attendance of that event within two years would be a good goal.

### Themes

Get-together themes can target specific groups that you want to engage, and should focus on positive topics. Speeches should be short to allow for conversation, and they should include or be supplemented with thanks you's and demonstrations of the impact of support for HTK.



## Summary of Sub-Goals and Tactics

	STEM Field Trips	High Tech Adults Tournament	Coach Pairing & Remote Mentoring	Winter & Summer Get-Togethers
Reinforce Social Connections	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create Lasting Memories	✓	✓	✓	✓
Help Supporters Feel the Impact of their Support	✓	✓		✓
Encourage Role Model Relationships	✓	✓	✓	✓



**THANK YOU!**