In this, our ninth year as a team, we look back on what we set out to do from the very beginning and how far we've come. We knew that what our community needed was a strong STEM program, not just a singular, robotics team. Over the years, we have faced many trials and tribulations. Our plans and our vision have grown and developed with the variety of people who have come to join us on our mission to inspire. Now our team faces its biggest challenge yet with the unexpected passing of the heart and soul of this mission, Co­-founder Phil Tucker. In honoring his memory, we find ourselves more driven than ever to pick up where he left off and to carry his message to those who will never have the chance to be touched by his passion for FIRST and its values. In its simplest form, our plan is to be as loud and as present within our community as possible. Year after year, our voice has become louder and the West Virginia FIRST program has seen tremendous growth as a result. As we look towards the future, our efforts are beginning to reach across state and even international borders. All of this is done, not to build robots with people, but to build people with robots. What we have created is a highly diverse collection of individuals from our community who came together to learn about mechanics and engineering, but walked away with so much more. When students come to MARS, they are not simply joining a team or signing up for an extracurricular activity. They are becoming members of a close­-knit, fiercely driven family. This passion and dedication is what builds character within each participant and helps them become well-­rounded, active members of the community. Our youth see the power they have to make a difference and genuinely change the world around them. The MARS impact does not end after high school. Many of our alumni have stayed with their MARS family and formed a mentor training program. While we are quite proud that 83% of our alumni are majoring in STEM fields, those studying other disciplines also continue to volunteer their time with FIRST and other STEM programs across the nation. Last year, some of our alumni lead the national, 1st place, NASA Sample Return Mission Robotics Challenge team at the collegiate level. We are proud to call the great state of West Virginia our home. However, current socio­economic conditions and geographic barriers make it hard to spread educational programs like FIRST to the students who need them the most. We developed the MARS Plan which focuses our efforts in struggling, rural areas. It emphasizes a focus on community presence; to increase strategic partnerships that might assist us in overcoming these barriers. The key goal of these efforts is to create\* sustainable teams and programs throughout the state. We are constantly finding new ways to make ourselves known to individuals and organizations all over our state. In 2015, we logged 80 team hours at 13 outreach events. In addition to many events in our local community, we reached out to over 3,000 youth in distant rural towns during those months. Getting to the rural events required 12.5 hours of travel time and 568.2 miles to show our robots, do fun activities and talk about FIRST, and that's just a snapshot! Over the past five years, we have talked to thousands of people at dozens of events, demonstrations, and classes. These include the West Virginia State Fair, the October Sky Rocket Boys Festival, STEM nights at elementary schools, science days at the local children's museum, parades, career fairs, summer camps, tech conferences, sponsor presentations, baseball games, and so much more. Our audiences range from state government officials to attendees of a local pet adoption event. Everywhere we go, we strive to form strong partnerships with potential sponsors and other supporters of our mission. These partners are one of the most vital parts of our team's success. They are everything from the auto paint shop that paints our robot frame to the advanced aerospace companies that provide funding and technical advice in carbon composite materials. Among the most critical of our sponsors are those who directly support our outreach efforts; such as the United Way and the NASA WV Space Grant Consortium. Also playing a key role in our success is our university sponsor, West Virginia University. WVU provides work space, access to tooling, and a seemingly infinite supply of enthusiastic mentors. Our sponsors are kept informed of our affairs and many are given yearly presentations detailing our progress. Every year, we host an open house which allows all of our supporters the chance to see our newly completed robot in action before the start of each competition season. We pride ourselves in giving back to our sponsors. We provide volunteers for United Way functions, design LEGO models of NASA satellites, and provide referees and judges for NASA sponsored FLL events throughout the state. With these partners, FIRST programs are growing rapidly in WV. NASA and other community organizations have helped us to start\* new teams in Jr. FLL, FLL, FTC, and VEX. In 2014, we provided over $6,000 in funding to support developing FLL and FTC teams and $15,000 to the other FRC teams in WV. At the beginning of this year, we were able to supply 10 new VEX teams with their kit of parts. The FLL program remains strong, and we supported\* 2 FLL teams with direct funding and actively mentor over twenty. We have also recently taken huge steps in the establishment\* of Jr. FLL teams through a WVU College of Business and Economics Community Service grant and the help of our local United Way. This helped us start\* 11 teams and laid the foundation for a feeder system to get students involved in FIRST at an even younger age. Since the initiation of the MARS plan, the number of WV's 55 counties with FIRST programs has grown from 5 to 27. The FLL and Jr. FLL program is a key focus for all members of our team. To ensure that every team we are involved with has exactly what they need to be successful and sustainable, we dedicate the fall months to mentoring\* teams and assisting/running\* events all over the state. Beyond hosting\* bi­weekly mentoring sessions at our practice facility, each student is assigned as a point of contact for at least one FLL team so that they have a direct connection to MARS. We run\* our own scrimmage and regional qualifying event as well as supplying staff and logistical support\* to the state championship and other WV FLL events. The growing FLL/Jr. FLL program is a feeder system for FRC programs. This year, we have laid the foundation to work with Fairmont State University to start\* our second daughter FRC team, and we do not plan on stopping there. One of our biggest milestones in introducing FRC to WV was hosting an off­season event unlike any other, West Virginia Robotics Extreme. This was not just the first FRC endurance event, 26 hours and 14 minutes of non­stop FRC action, but it was also the first FRC competition to ever be held in WV. It was a breakthrough for the members of our community to have the opportunity to see how amazing programs like FIRST can truly be. We are excited to have officially signed on to run\* this event for a second time in the summer of 2016 and WVU will again offer 3 full­ tuition scholarships to the winning alliance and an additional scholarship to the team winning the Coaches' Award. Assisting FRC programs in our region requires forging a strong relationship with our surrounding teams. We share our practice facilities, host kick­off brainstorming sessions, and offer mentoring\* support throughout build season to teams in WV and southwestern Pennsylvania, such as Road Dogs 3511, 4­H Gears 3955, and Titanium Titans 4467. When we travel for competition, we take this philosophy on the road through the "Tiger Team" system. Tiger Teams visit each pit at every competition and make sure every team gets onto the field. This is how we build a sense of community wherever we go. In memory of their founder, Phil Tucker, these teams have been renamed the "Tucker Teams." It is clear from the outpouring of support from the FIRST community after Phil's passing this year that the Tucker Teams have had a region­-wide impact and have inspired a true sense of Gracious Professionalism at events attended by MARS. MARS is very proud of what we have been able to do within WV. Since our focus is always sustainability, we are already looking towards the future with visions of an impact on a much larger scale. For starters, in 2017, MARS will be working with NASA to provide the volunteer staff, the referees, support the judging, and organize the logistics for what we hope will become the United States' first ever, true FLL National Championship Event. We are also excited for the development of outreach efforts designed to reach struggling rural areas around the world. The first step in this process has been supporting our second student to bring FIRST to rural India. Pragya is currently taking a gap year from school to teach robotics to students in her family's home village with financial and logistical support from MARS back at home. Last year Ben did the same thing. We have also begun working with a rookie FLL team in Zimbabwe through virtual mentoring\* and video tutorials. Though MARS has faced many challenges, we have faced them as a family and have emerged this year stronger than ever. The future is bright for each project and each team member as we move forward with the words and principals of Phil Tucker guiding the way. We came to be inspired, to grow, and to learn. We stay because we are challenged, driven, and bold visionaries. We will never stop fighting to become the inspiration. We are MARS.