



The Tech
Challenge

RAISE THE ROOF

2026

2026 Executive Summary

Inspiring a New Generation of Innovators



Inspiring a New Generation of Innovators

About the program

A signature program of The Tech, The Tech Challenge is an annual engineering design challenge for students in Grades 4-12. Generally, about 45% of participants are girls and roughly 40% of students come from Title I schools. Now entering its 40th year, this program continues to embody The Tech's mission by inspiring the next generation of innovators. Over 45,000 students have participated since the program's inception.

Developing problem-solvers and learning from failure

Beginning in November, teams spend months using the engineering design process to solve an annual unique real-world challenge. Teams document every step of their journey including testing, brainstorming, and most importantly, what they learn through experimentation and failure. The program culminates in an inspiring Spring showcase where teams put their solutions to the test.

Local, national, and global

Our 39 years of Tech Challenge expertise is the foundation of our Design Challenge Learning methodology at The Tech. Design Challenge Lesson plans shared via our website and with our partners impacted an estimated 568,000 youth this past year. In Kenya, we trained over 20,000 educators in 1,290 schools and are anticipating at least 1,500 students attending the *Survive The Storm* showcases across two counties. Our goal is that, by 2030, one million educators will be using Tech-produced materials to develop problem-solving skills in their students.

New initiatives

Like our learners, The Tech Challenge program is always iterating and improving. This year The Tech deepened the impact of The Tech Challenge through a number of new initiatives.

- **Scaling adviser and team support:** Online courses, virtual test trials, and new workshop models are just a few examples of ways we have been redesigning resources for advisers and their teams. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and we look forward to deepening this work in the coming year.
- **Recognizing each team:** The new debrief station at this year's showcase was designed to provide teams time to process the experience, make sense of what they learned, and receive recognition on different aspects of the program. A debrief volunteer observed:

"Such a beautiful way to emphasize the whole process, not just the 4.5 minutes of testing. It really seemed to make an impact on the participants, who were able to push past the disappointment of an unsuccessful test and see all of the hard work, the learning, the teamwork, and the totality of what they'd accomplished."

We look forward to next year and new opportunities to not only increase participation, but ensure sustainable quality as we expand the program beyond the San Jose area.

Thank you supporters and volunteers

We are grateful to our generous individual, corporate, and foundation supporters for helping us inspire the next generation of innovators and problem-solvers. In 2026, many of these supporters also joined us as volunteers and helped make our Showcase Weekend a big success.

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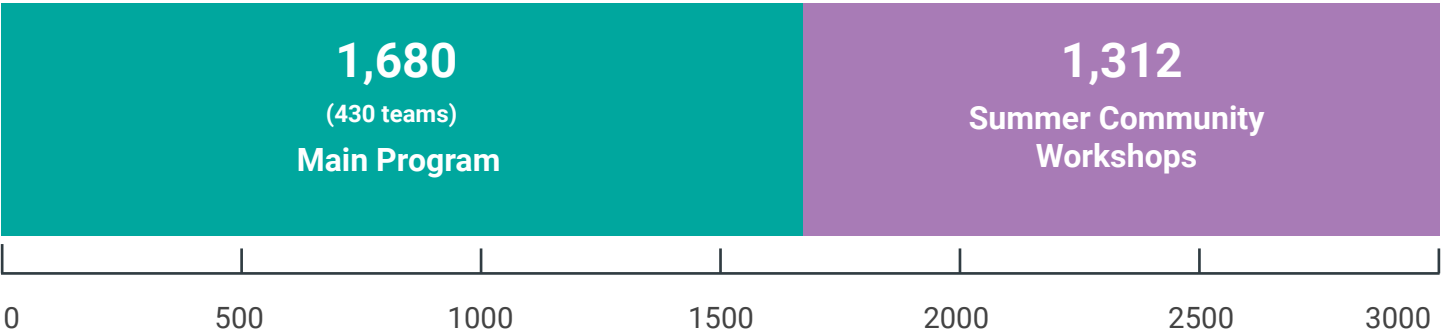
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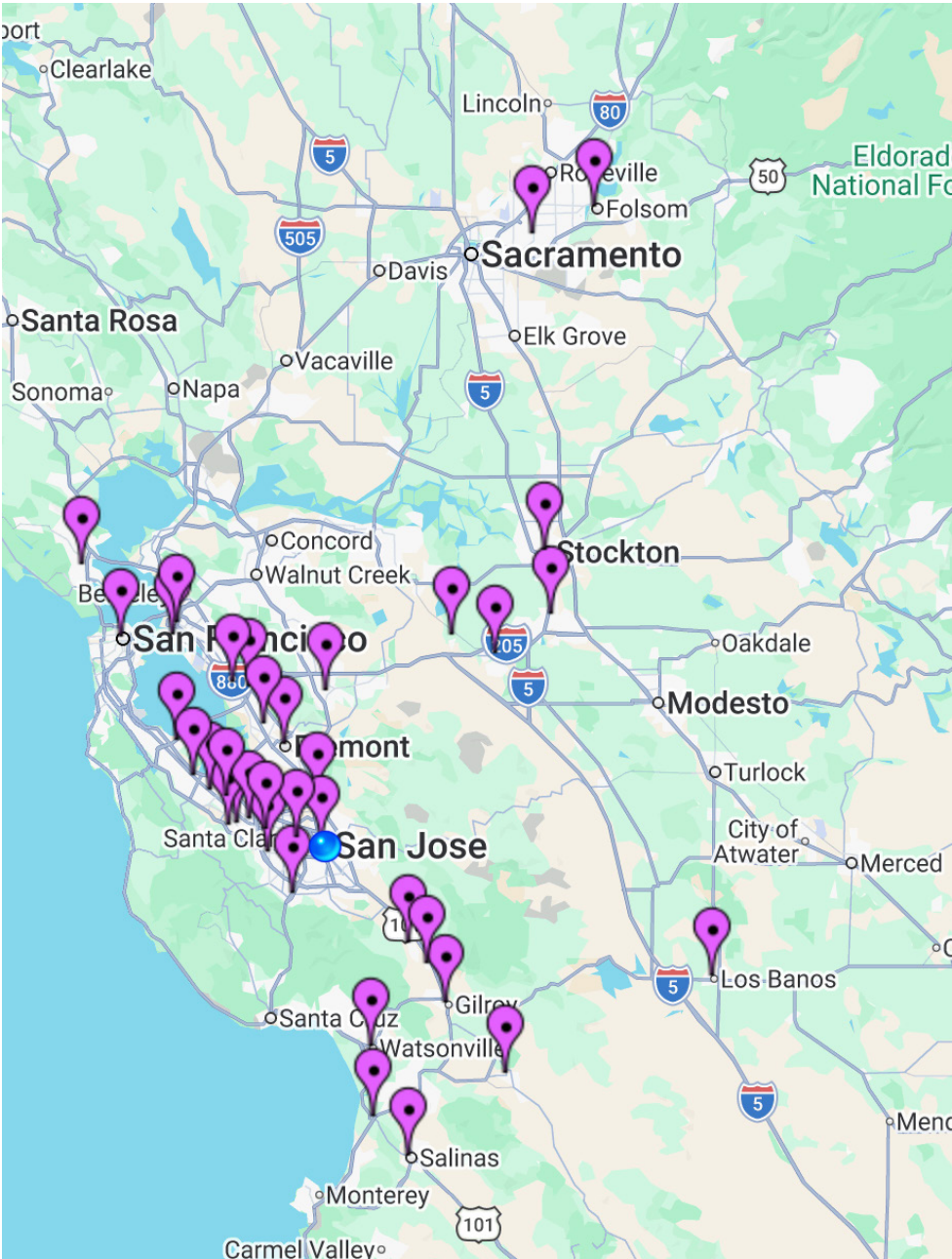
Ken Washington, Ph.D.
Medtronic
The Tech Board

The Tech Challenge By the Numbers: Participants

Total Participants Served: 2,992



Bringing participants together from... California



San Francisco & North Bay:
San Francisco, Corte Madera

The Peninsula:
Foster City, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Redwood City

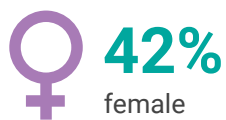
East Bay:
Alameda, Dublin, Fremont, Hayward, Milpitas, Oakland, Pleasanton, San Lorenzo, Union City

South Bay (Silicon Valley):
Campbell, Cupertino, Los Gatos, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, Sunnyvale

Central Valley & Greater Sacramento:
Carmichael, Folsom, Lathrop, Mountain House, Stockton, Tracy

Central Coast & South Valley:
Castroville, Davenport, Gilroy, Hollister, Los Banos, Morgan Hill, Salinas, San Martin, Seaside, Watsonville

The Tech Challenge By the Numbers: Participants



4% non-binary, prefer not to say, or no response



of registered teams represented Title I schools and/or community-based after-school programs, actively expanding access to STEM and hands-on engineering for underrepresented youth



of participants would recommend The Tech Challenge to a friend

Because of The Tech Challenge, participants said...

83%



I feel more like a "STEM person."

83%



I am better at solving problems that are new to me.

84%



I am less likely to give up, even when things get hard.

89%



I am more likely to try out other kids' ideas when working together.

82%



I am better at explaining my ideas to other people.

82%



I am better at turning my ideas into real things.

86%



I am more likely to try new ways of doing things (even if they might not work).

81%



I am more excited to learn as much as I can about STEM.

89%



I am more confident I can learn challenging things.

The Tech Challenge By the Numbers: Advisers & Parents



“Advisers” are the dedicated teachers, parents, and after-school educators who mentor student teams throughout the Tech Challenge, guiding them through the engineering design process and fostering collaborative problem-solving.



83%

of advisers and parents would enthusiastically recommend The Tech Challenge

Advisers say The Tech Challenge helps...		Strongly Agree
	build problem-solving skills in my students	77%
	build collaboration skills in my students	72%
	build a STEM (science, technology, engineering or math) identity in my students	71%



The Tech Challenge Feedback: Participants, Educators, Volunteers & Supporters

Participant Feedback

"I learned that I was able to become more independent than I thought, I could work with others to create a plan! I learned that I could solve problems as well!"



"I have learned that I actually enjoy hands-on work in relation to engineering issues as compared to computer work."



"I learned how much I love engineering and turning my ideas into reality."



"I learned that I'm pretty good at taking action when things seem hopeless."

"I realized that when I pay attention to others' ideas, I can adapt my ideas and learn from others."

"I learned that things don't always go the way you want it to, so I learned to persevere through those challenges and take risks."

Educator Feedback

"The standout highlight was the collaborative work where we brought in educators from classrooms and different modalities such as the after school program and we had a huge collaboration with families."

— Lupita Arroyo-Lozano,
K-12 STEAM Program, Hartnell College Foundation



"It is a wonderfully social, brain-stimulating experience that teaches kids how to think outside the box."

— After-School Educator



"I loved watching the kids grow and seeing them learn how to use the tools and watching their ideas change throughout the months."

— Carl Erickson,
Buchser Middle School

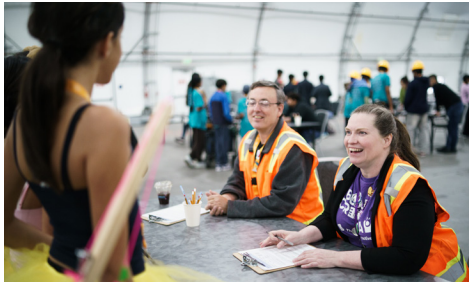


"The challenge itself is always the best part as it allows the students to come up with creative ways to apply basic physics concepts - even when they are too young to have studied physics they get to appreciate those principles early on!"

— Parent Adviser

Volunteer Feedback

"The focus is STEM learning, so the emphasis is on what the students put into the challenge and not a competition pitting students against each other. Just by learning through the challenge, they are all winners."



"I am very passionate about education and I believe in the mission of The Tech Challenge! Honored to be part of this event!"



"My favorite thing about The Tech Challenge is seeing the ingenuity of the teams and their incredibly diverse solutions."



"This has been such a positive experience for me, and I encourage others to give it a try in the future."



"I had so much fun at The Tech Challenge. I never wanted it to end."

Supporter Feedback

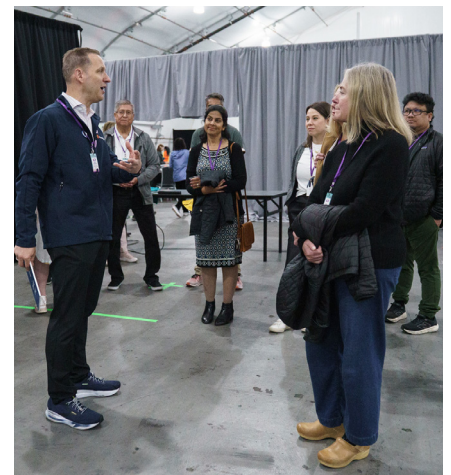


"At Hitachi, we celebrate success while valuing the learning process behind it. Failure does not hinder our growth; instead, it strengthens our determination to improve and builds resilience in the face of setbacks. By supporting programs like The Tech Challenge, we serve as role models for young people, share our insights, and help guide them on their path to success."

— Hitachi America, Community Action Committee

"When students feel supported, develop a sense of belonging, and are empowered to solve problems, they don't just become better learners, they become future leaders, innovators, and engaged citizens who are ready to strengthen their communities. That's one of the reasons City Year Bay Area is proud to partner with The Tech Interactive. The Tech Challenge brings real-world engineering and design problems into students' hands, encouraging them to work in teams, think creatively, test ideas, learn from failure, and iterate toward solutions. There isn't a single "right" answer, which mirrors the kinds of complex problems students will encounter throughout their lives and careers."

— Pranav Joshi, Analytics Manager, City Year Bay Area



The Tech Challenge: Marketing Overview

Digital Engagement

The Tech Challenge Marketing Strategy was built on key learnings from the previous years' experiments, prioritizing The Tech Challenge Facebook/Instagram channels and The Tech Interactive's LinkedIn page.

Our "less is more" content experiment proved highly successful. While total social media output decreased, average engagement per post surged, driving organic growth and pushing The Tech Challenge Instagram channel past **1,106 followers!**

This shift in quality was perfectly illustrated when one highly targeted post went viral, racking up over **72,908 views** and securing **421 engagements** to dramatically expand our organic reach.



Thanks for sharing!



Media Coverage



Videos

[2026 Promo Video](#)

[2026 Highlights Video](#)

[Tech Challenge Impact Video](#)



Photos from Showcase

[The Tech Interactive's Flickr album](#)



News Article

The Mercury News

Audience Reach: 93,000

Publicity Value: \$8,634.75



Press Releases

April 21, 2026 | Press Ranger

[Bay Area Students Tackle Housing Crisis with Engineering Solutions in The Tech Interactive's 39th Annual Tech Challenge](#)

- **Reach & Pickups:**
200M+ total potential; 891 media pickups
- **Engagement & Views:**
6,480 release views/hits; 8 podcast placements.

April 29, 2026 | Press Ranger

[Bay Area Students Raise the Roof with Engineering Solutions at The Tech Interactive's 39th Annual Tech Challenge](#)

- **Reach & Pickups:**
200M+ total potential; 1,004 media pickups
- **Engagement & Views:**
5,255 release views hits; 9 podcast placements

Thank you 2026 supporters!



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