

# 2006 Woodie Flowers Award Submission

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On Team 461, the Inspiration in FIRST is embodied by Mr. Steve Florence. “Flo”, as he is affectionately called, is the glue that binds together this Chairman’s Award winning team. Through student enrichment, team management, and creating a fun, productive atmosphere, Mr. Florence is the driving force on our team, and without him, Team 461 would likely cease to exist.

Seven years ago, Flo and Purdue freshman Shannon Schnepf started Westside Boiler Invasion when they saw the dire need for rejuvenation of passion for science and technology in their community. He has since continued his mission by creating and mentoring four FLL teams, running a summer lego-league camp, and been a vital force in the birth of the Boilermaker Regional. Treating young teams like 1646, 1747, and 1555 as his own, he sends parts and personnel to their aid. Flo’s many roles include teaching students personally, organizing Purdue FIRST travel, and serving as Education Program Coordinator for the Boilermaker Regional.



On a personal level, Flo means infinitely more to high school students than what can be seen in his accomplishments on the robot. Despite other commitments, during build season he is a consistent driving force in the lab, and has since sacrificed his coaching of the wrestling team in order to devote more time to FIRST. Senior Navid Hojatti noted that Flo often stays late after everyone else leaves, returning to teach early in the morning. On the few occasions that he cannot be at meetings, he checks in and has advisors walk students out to their cars late at night. Alex Turco, another senior, recalls that Flo helped him fix his car twice when it broke down.

Flo allows everyone who wishes to join the team, despite warnings against large team size from other mentors in the FIRST community. He places students who demonstrate leadership ability in situations where they can develop, while still including every team member in each project. Flo teaches Purdue advisors to become better leaders, handing over responsibility, allowing them to truly be mentors. Still, he is always dependable and remains the

only mentor who has been able to stay with the team since its inception. Despite all he does for the team, Flo maintains the embodiment of humility, constantly stepping out of the spotlight to allow others credit for his accomplishments. Senior Andrea Pluckebaum, notes that, "Not only does Flo teach us, but he cares for us. When [Senior] Catherine Wallace was in the hospital, he didn't just allow us, but strongly encouraged us, to go visit her—even though it was during the six weeks." Senior Cliff Reeder, echoes this idea, "Flo is...awesome." President of the Parent Booster Club, Elizabeth Akey says, "Flo's driving motivation is to help the students find passion, whether it be in engineering or another area. With FIRST, he embodies the passion that he hopes to inspire in others." Matt Adams, former 461 mentor and now engineer, considers Flo "an optimist, a big picture thinker, and a 'get up and do it' kind of guy. It's this sort of character that makes him a man I'm glad to call a personal role model in a world with so few true men."



Team 461 functions as a healthy FIRST team because at its heart is Flo, beating relentlessly. Mr. Florence is a true leader and the foundation upon which Team 461 stands. This is why we, the students of Westside Boiler Invasion, propose Steve "Flo" Florence for the 2006 Woodie Flowers Award. In the lives of these students, Flo's impact is like none other, and quite possibly never will be.

