

Steve Florence, Our Hero: 2008 Woodie Flowers Award Submission

Floism 1. A humorous comment relating to or about a person or object. 2. The relentless dedication and extensive effort spent completing a task. 3. The inspirational effect on an individual by Mr. Steve "Flo" Florence.



Nine years ago, Flo and a Purdue University freshman founded Westside Boiler Invasion (WBI) after observing the desperate need for the rejuvenation of science and technology in education. With the respect Flo garnered after 24 years of teaching, the community seized the opportunity. After relinquishing his positions as head wrestling and assistant football coach, he was able to focus on the newly founded team. In addition to WBI, he also helped found Purdue FIRST Programs, an organization that now supports three local teams. Flo functions as the primary mentor for one FIRST Robotics Competition Team (FRC), one FIRST Tech Competition (FTC) and three FIRST Lego League (FLL) teams. What's more? He holds annual summer camps to further introduce robotics in the community where he uses FIRST components to teach students design and engineering concepts. To this day, Flo continues to expand FIRST, initiating five FRC teams and providing guidance as they develop.



Flo is the driving force behind WBI, helping the team function, while helping students foster individually. He places students who demonstrate leadership ability into positions where they can develop, still including every team member in each project. Flo teaches Purdue advisors to become better leaders by handing over responsibilities and allowing them to truly be mentors. Amid all that he does, Flo continues to embody humility and dedication, constantly avoiding the spotlight to allow others to accept credit for accomplishments. Sophomore Nitesh Bajaj describes Flo's character by stating, "With Flo, it's not about the things you do; it's about how you do them." Flo leads students in the right direction by pushing them to answer their own questions. Former President of the Parent Booster Club, Elizabeth Akey, accurately portrays Flo's dedication by stating, "Flo's driving motivation is to help the students find passion. With FIRST, he embodies the passion that he hopes to inspire in others." Matt Adams, a 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, always beating faithfully. Mr. Florence is a true leader, not only as the foundation upon which Team 461 stands but also as a remarkable community figure. Flo's inspiration and dedication exemplifies the characteristics of a true leader and role model. This is why we, the students of



Westside Boiler Invasion, nominate Steve "Flo" Florence for the 2008 Woodie Flowers Award.