

# 2007 Woodie Flowers Award Submission

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If 461 were a river, Mr. Steve "Flo" Florence would be our riverbank, guiding us along the proper path and holding us together. Every day, when members of Westside Boiler Invasion (WBI) come to robotics meetings, Flo inspires us to do the best that we can.

Flo's dedication to 461 inspires team members to strive for excellence. He is the only mentor who has consistently worked with WBI throughout its eight-year history, and his zeal for the team has not diminished since. Junior Melissa DeYoung explains, "Flo comes [to school] at 7:30 AM and stays until 4:00 as a teacher, but instead of going home, he stays at school until 9:30 or 10:00 as a mentor." Sophomore Karen Shen agrees, saying, "He's always the first one here and the last one to leave."



While he is extremely enthusiastic about FIRST, Flo recognizes that the six-week build season puts enormous pressure on some students. "I'm currently taking several Purdue courses, so I haven't been able to come to robotics as much as I'd like," says senior Mohit Agrawal. "Flo understands this, and he's still letting me go to competitions because he knows that I've tried to come." Flo's considerate nature makes him endearing to 461 students.

Flo's commitment to 461 extends to keeping the students effectively engaged. He begins each meeting by previewing the objectives for the day. But Flo does not monopolize the conversation; rather, "Flo also asks the leaders of each subteam for their goals for the night," junior Sam Owens says. "He keeps us all on task by getting the students involved in the to-do list." Freshman Nitesh Bajaj adds, "For lack of a better term, Flo is like your dad in that you don't want to disappoint him, and nothing disappoints him more than idle robotics members when there's work to do." Flo encourages interaction between the subteams as well. Senior Chris Tharp, the head of the animation team, has it right when he says, "When the animation was submitted my rookie year, I thought that I was done with robotics for the season. Flo changed that by convincing me to come and help out with the team website, something I wouldn't have done without his encouragement."



Despite cautionary words from other FIRST teams and even some 461 members, Flo favors a large robotics team. To this end, he allows every student who completes the application form to join. Once they are on the team, Flo immediately places new students in valued positions. Karlis Jansons, a junior, comments, "I'm new on the team and joined the Outreach and Initiatives subteam expecting to do busywork for my first year. Instead, Flo showed that he respects me as an independent worker by letting me contribute to major projects like the Chairman's Award." In addition to respecting new members, Flo honors experienced students' wishes to change their focus within the team. During the 2007 season, junior Kyle Muray decided that he would enjoy programming Rowdy Pete 8.0 more than working on the website, which he had done previously. As he recalls, "Flo let me make the switch because that's what I wanted to do." Every student on 461 has favorable words for Flo because of the enormous respect he gives the team members.

Mr. Steve "Flo" Florence is an amazing, passionate mentor. He inspires us with his dedication to the team; his significance can't be overemphasized. That is why we, the students of Team 461, renominate Flo for the Woodie Flowers Award in 2007. We encourage you to recognize his vital importance and "go with the Flo."

