

2009 Woodie Flowers Nomination

Dave Doerr



Dave Doerr's middle name might be William on his birth certificate, but it's 'Robot' in his heart. For the last seven years, Dave has touched the lives of hundreds of students through FLL, Robofest, and FRC.

Mr. Doerr heard about FLL in 2002, and it was love at "FIRST" sight. He began a team that year, and has been coaching ever since. Many students who passed through Mr. Doerr's FLL team are now on the HOT Team, and value their experience: "Being on his FLL team prepared me very well for FRC and beyond," says John, one such student, "He always shows us how to do something, and doesn't just do it himself. By creating PowerPoint presentations on difficult concepts – like friction and traction – we are able to form our own ideas based on knowledge. This experience wouldn't have been possible without Mr. Doerr's dedication. During the season, and sometimes offseason, he works long weekends trying to make sure we really know what we're doing. He's always so patient – I don't think I've ever seen him frustrated with us."

Megan is another student who has been affected by Mr. Doerr. She was on his FLL and Robofest teams and is a senior on the HOT Team. "I remember that I wanted to be an English teacher before I met Dave," says Megan, "At first, I was part of FLL for something to do after school, but I grew to love it. Working with Mr. Doerr over the past seven years has given me the confidence I need to overcome real life challenges. When I was in eighth grade, Mr. Doerr asked me to do Robofest, and I agreed. There were only three of us, so I had to learn to program the robot. Dave's encouragement helped me learn, and in no time I could program in NQC. I never thought I would be capable of that, but the experience changed the way I view science and now I'm planning on becoming an engineer."

At the beginning of the season, we gathered to brainstorm ideas for robot designs. Student designs were always the first to be considered, and everyone was able to give input. By facilitating a student led design, Mr. Doerr motivated us to work as a cohesive team. As one student, Matt, said: "His patient and helpful attitude creates an intelligent atmosphere of collaboration and efficiency on our team."

This year, our team was chosen to be a part of Beta testing, and Dave stepped up to the plate. He worked tirelessly with students and gave very valuable feedback to FIRST. Dave invited every member of our team to participate, even the chairman and animation groups. By opening up this opportunity to everyone, one of the chairman's students built her first pneumatics system. She had only been there to document, but because of Mr. Doerr's encouragement to join the beta testing team, she accepted the proffered challenge. This student, Gabi, now plans on pursuing a career in engineering.

Dave is primarily a programming mentor, but he goes out of his way to be informed about other groups and encourages student collaboration. At lunch every Saturday, Dave has the sub-groups report their progress to the entire team. By having students do this, he improves our communication skills and challenges us to be efficient and succinct.

Mr. Doerr has perfected the art of being a phenomenal leader: One must instill passion in those that you wish to motivate. His contagious enthusiasm for FIRST inspires Gracious Professionalism in all of us. So, as Mr. Doerr would say, "Let's go do robots!"