

GM Mentor of the Year



Jim Meyer

The difference between a good team and an excellent team is leadership. As Chief Engineer, Jim Meyer has led the engineering group of the Heroes of Tomorrow (HOT) for the last eleven years. Throughout these years, Jim's leadership has produced two world championships, one world finalist, eighteen regional gold medals, and over twenty engineering design awards. Under the leadership of Jim Meyer, the HOT team is one of the most decorated robotics teams in all of FIRST.

Jim's ability to inspire students with innovative, yet simple designs is the real key to the HOT team's success. HOT team student, Autumn Giles, commented, "Jim Meyer is the most creative mentor I know. He is extremely dedicated to robotics and doesn't mind spending his free time with us in order to build or improve the robot." Whenever a design issue comes up,

Jim is always able to quickly come up with a “crazy idea”, taking into account all the variables required to solve the problem. At the core of Jim’s engineering philosophy is the statement, “If it doesn’t look right, it probably isn’t right”. With this simple phrase Jim pushes the engineering team to continuously improve until they can produce a simple design that is both robust and efficient. The students see the results of this thought process and carry this philosophy with them as they enter the world beyond FIRST robotics.

Any day during the build season, Jim can be found surrounded by students asking questions and intently listening to his answers. He challenges the students to be able to explain their ideas and how they work within the context of the robot. Although he claims to not be a teacher, the students are taught to be creative in their ideas, understand how the design is working, and take calculated risk when necessary. When working with the students to assemble or machine a part, Jim instructs the students on the correct way to complete the task, without performing it for them. HOT team student, David Drouillard said, “Jim is very skilled at making parts on various machines in the shop, and is always willing to pass on his knowledge. He makes sure you learn exactly the right way to do something and will work with you until you can do it correctly.”

Jim is not only a mentor to the students, but also to other mentors. He trusts his team mates to make their contributions and delegates responsibility, as necessary, among the mentors to ensure the robot has a high build quality and meets its deadlines. Everyone knows his demand for excellence, and the team pushes themselves to meet those expectations. If you earn his praise it is well deserved, because he holds himself and all of us to high standards of performance and excellence.

The entire team has been inspired by the thought process of a true engineering experience. We have been taught how to anchor a strategy around a core design, challenged to be creative, and demanded to be excellent. The result is a strong robot with exceptional capability to perform the required tasks.

Jim Meyer, through many years of dedication and fun, has offered the entire HOT team the opportunity to be led into excellence. We are proud to nominate Jim Meyer for the General Motors mentor of the year award!

