

Walter Hickok has been an instrumental voice in the growth of FIRST and Team 67, The Heroes of Tomorrow, since its beginning in 1997. Senior member Alex Garrigo has even deemed him "the Grandfather of FIRST." In 1998, the HOT Team piloted the FIRST Lego League. Walt was the main driving force in this effort. He guided FLL teams through their build. By Nov. of 1998, the HOT Team had successfully hosted the first ever FLL Regional. Walt has worked continuously with FLL since then, still serving as the Judging Advisor for the FLL White Lake Championship. He was instrumental in the establishment of the FIRST in Michigan FRC model and serves on its board. In 2004, Walt realized the dire need for community awareness of FIRST. From this, Team 67's iconic robot named CASEY (Community Awareness of Science and Engineering Year-Round) was born. Walt and team members have taken CASEY to countless parades, schools and various community events. CASEY has been seen by thousands of people and has increased awareness of the HOT Team and FIRST.

Walt assisted in the launch of many teams including premier FRC teams The Thunder Chickens, Frog Force, Panteras, in Mexico and Chilean Heart. In 2005, HOT cooked up the recipe for success and won the ever so coveted Chairman's Award. Walt, and his chairman's students, compiled all the ingredients to make HOT successful. This had a lasting effect on the judging panel, winning HOT the award. Walt has been an influence in many students' lives, many of them pursuing careers that he introduced them to. For over half a decade, Walt has been our Team Leader. He was also a significant force in the formation of our team's board and has served on it since its inception.

Currently, Walt is working at the Robot Garage in Birmingham, Michigan where he encourages students to pursue activities such as FLL and later, FRC. Similar to the ideals of FIRST, The Robot Garage is a place where students of all ages can learn how to go from "Hoping something will work to knowing how to make it work." Since HOT's establishment, Walt has gifted the team with his leadership, experience and knowledge. Walt is a "hands-off" mentor who lets you learn from your failures and rejoice in your triumphs. Student Emma Beattie, who has worked closely with Walt, states "He is the success of the team, and we would be nowhere close to where we are today without him." Walt is adamant about keeping in touch with HOT Team alumni, e-mailing and calling many of them years after they graduate. Walt reminds us what it means to be a Chairman's Award-winning team.

In his 16 years involved with FIRST, Walt has accomplished many things that others could not even imagine. He is very deserving of this award. Perhaps this fact is stated best by fellow mentor Adam Freeman, "Walt is a perfect candidate for Woodie Flowers. His dedication to FLL, FRC, FIRST in Michigan and being involved with HOT this long-it seems like Walt is Mr. FIRST from a participation standpoint."