

FIRST's mission is to "inspire young people to be science and technology leaders, by engaging them in exciting mentor-based programs that build science, engineering and technology skills, that inspire innovation, and that foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication, and leadership." If this is FIRST's mission, then Mr. Mark McLeod is the embodiment of that mission. Team 358's Mr. McLeod is a role model, not only for students, but for all mentors and advisors in FIRST.

Mr. McLeod started out as an outsider looking in, a new parent whose involvement was mostly through his children, but his interest grew rapidly. As a programmer himself, he could relate to much of what FIRST Robotics is about. Through Mr. McLeod's eight years with the program, he has upheld the ideals of gracious professionalism and has created the interest in science and engineering that is central to FIRST. Mr. McLeod has become our most dedicated mentor, who is at our shop day and night, always demonstrating FIRST's values. Mr. McLeod also realized the importance of inspiring young people, and throughout the years and till today he aims to work towards granting as many young minds as possible the opportunity to become active in FIRST. He has been integral to Team 358's extensive efforts to spread FIRST, as he often mentors, advises, and provides volunteer support and his valuable time to mentor numerous Long Island teams. Through the years, these teams have included Uniondale, Port Washington, Roosevelt, Mount Sinai, Baldwin, Glen Cove, Great Neck, Smithtown, and Copiague. Most teams know him for his helpful yearly programming workshops designed to develop integral programming skills.

During the fall, we also had specialized meetings where students learned how to use tools around the room before the season started. Mr. McLeod would attend every meeting, teaching members of the team how to use various tool and teaching a large number of

students the basics of programming. Mr. McLeod also scheduled many events for the team all by himself. One example is when a few team members went to Northrop Grumman, where he works, so that we could demonstrate our 2007 robot for the employees. He set up the event where six teams, including ours, could go visit Grumman and present there. Before we did our presentations, Mr. McLeod asked for help from his employees and showed us around Grumman. This was an inspiration to many of us and showed us what professional engineers would perform throughout their careers.

In addition to spreading interest in the program, Mr. McLeod provides help to other teams through the internet and in person. During the regional competitions, when we ask our teammates where Mr. McLeod is, they often respond with a shrug and say that he is MIA. This is because Mr. McLeod is always moving around the arena, helping other teams throughout the competitions. It's not unusual to see a member of another team running over to say, "It's an emergency! We need Mr. McLeod!" Often teams have some coding difficulties and ask him for help to program their robot. Mr. McLeod helps them by programming the robot according to what that team wants. Often he spends the whole time in the competition helping other teams, missing his own team's matches. Mr. McLeod truly wants the FIRST program to prevail all across the country, and especially here on Long Island.

Mr. McLeod deserves to be celebrated as a fantastic mentor, not only to Team 358, but also to the whole FIRST community. He has dedicated much of his time to FIRST, helping various teams throughout Long Island and across the country. His dedication and moral integrity have touched so many in the FIRST program, and will continue to make a tremendous impact on FIRST teams in the future.