

Woodie Flowers Award Submission: Mr. Paul McFarlin

Two words frequently used to describe Paul McFarlin are "humble" and "dedicated." As a loving father, grandfather, and life-long machinist, his passion extends far and wide. Hailing from FRC Team 599, Mr. McFarlin arrived at Carmel High School in 2005 with a mission to share his knowledge of machining. Teaming up with seven curious students, he convinced Carmel High why Team 2035 was a necessary addition to our school community. After the team's first regional, school administrators were amazed by his work-ethic, experience, and impact on students; they were persuaded to add more shop courses into the curriculum to promote a hands-on kind of learning. Now, as a teacher of industrial arts, robotics, engineering, automotives, and stagecraft, it is incredible that Mr. McFarlin can still spend hundreds of hours after school helping to build a robot each year.

With his tremendous work-ethic and kind heart, he has inspired thousands of students to persevere and keep building. He encourages kids to communicate their wild ideas, but also understands when the team needs to focus. One of his most amazing talents is being able to bring both "gearheads" and "geeks" together to connect and build a fantastic result. While sharing his knowledge, he is also not afraid to learn from students and is never stubborn when it comes to design or strategy. He allows students to lead and learn from their mistakes instead of being overbearing. And yet, he is able to communicate clearly with several students asking him questions at once; he has never lost his temper despite the pressure of each build season.

However, Mr. McFarlin understands the true spirit of FIRST: to spread the enthusiasm for engineering, not just for Team 2035, but also for other schools in the area. He realized that Team 2035 needed to share its experience and resources with the rest of the Monterey Peninsula. He has reached out to eight high schools thus far, providing his expertise of FRC graciously to help create new teams. Each year, he hosts an advisory meeting for mentors across the Peninsula in order to encourage communication between teams and foster a community of FIRST teams on the Central Coast. The existence of FIRST at all in Monterey County can be traced back to Mr. McFarlin's passion for both robotics and helping others.

Every student on Team 2035 looks up to Mr. McFarlin for his engineering skills and FIRST experience. His friendly personality and humorous quirks lets him connect with each student on a personal level. Mr. McFarlin's openness with students creates trust within the team, and his dedication and passion are backed by his favorite saying, "Do it For the Kids." And that is exactly what he has done, for both the members of Team 2035 and others. As humble as he is, he often shies away from recognition that he truly deserves. But as he nears the end of his career as a teacher, it is clear how influential he has been to Carmel High and the Monterey Peninsula as a whole.