

Spotlight on David Parks, Lead Robot Inspector!



David is a very dedicated Lead Robot Inspector who oversees the Inspectors at events, helps all teams to have robots that are safe and ready to play, and answer endless questions about what is and is not legal on the robot. We are honored to have him as one of our Key Volunteers!

How long have I been volunteering for *FIRST*?

Since 2012.

What positions have I held?

I started as a mentor for a *FIRST* Tech Challenge team in Greensboro. One of my co-workers at the time was volunteering for *FIRST* Robotics Competition and suggested I take a look. I was hooked and started doing Robot Inspections. After a couple of years, I was offered a position as a Lead Robot Inspector and I accepted it. That's my current assignment, but I also try to do whatever I can at THOR events. And I visit teams at their locations if they'd like to get some insights on what might be coming up and some suggestions on how to be ready.

What is my favorite part of volunteering?

Two parts for me – the other volunteers. And seeing the 'light' go off with a team member when he or she gets it. Not just how the process works but why.

How has volunteering helped me?

For me, volunteering builds and strengthens my people skills. And since geeks like me usually, deal with inanimate objects most of the day it's an extra tool in my personal and professional tool boxes.

What words of advice would I give to new volunteers or to those considering volunteering?

Don't let the robot side of the activities intimidate you. The robot is only small part of what *FIRST* allows us to do. Every event we're in front of several hundred blank canvases looking for guidance, motivation, respect, acknowledgment. And you don't need a Ph.D. for that. Just a caring, sharing nature.

Any favorite anecdotes?

One from our regional days at Dorton Arena. We were checking robots in and directing them to the pit areas. As the evening was winding down we got word teams would not be allowed to leave their battery chargers overnight. I was going around to pits to advise them of the situation, and one team captain was visibly concerned. He proceeded to explain to me (in his best GP voice) that this was not acceptable. The nature of the batteries, the internal chemistry, the amp-hour requirements of the robots required that the battery charger is plugged in overnight. This is the science of the batteries. After he finished, I applauded his knowledge of battery chemistry. Then I explained to him that the ruling was not based on science, but new NC law as determined by the Fire Marshall's office. When asked if he could talk to the Fire Marshall, I said of course, but in the meantime, you can also take batteries with you tonight and charge some of them off-site. I finished by reminding him that teams aren't the only ones with guidelines during an event. ('Lightbulb'.)

