

Two aspects of this award are important: (1) the accomplishments in communication by the mentor and (2) the student's ability to communicate clearly and concisely through their nomination.

A specific judging criterion is based upon the team's description of how the mentor inspired each member of the team in some or all the following ways:

- Level of student participation;
- Creativity of effort;
- Clear explanation of mathematical, scientific, and engineering concepts;
- Demonstration of enthusiasm for Science and Engineering;
- Encouragement to work on projects as a team effort;
- Inspiration to use problem-solving skills;
- Inspiration to become an effective communicator; and
- Motivation through communication.

Each *FIRST* team completes a product development cycle as it designs a concept, develops a prototype, and builds and debugs a unique machine. This requires teamwork, attention to detail, scheduling and hard work. The award-winning essay should answer this question; "How did the candidate inspire your team throughout this process?" If the judges determine the essay best describes how this individual excels above all others as he or she inspires the team, then that mentor truly deserves to be recognized with the award that honors Professor Woodie Flowers and his contribution to engineering, education, and communication.

Max of 3000 characters!! (2966)

Our team name is perSEVERE because we have been taught that when things don't work out the first time, you must keep going. Many of the mentors on our team show us that every day, but it is Mike Johnston who truly embodies that spirit. For many of us, we would not have had the guts to even attempt to join the team, if it had not been for Mike's not-so-gentle coaxing. He is the reason many of us have found our passions.

Mike Johnston is an extraordinary mentor on our team for many reasons. One the things that makes him such an outstanding mentor is his unparalleled communication skills. Though I have been told he receives over 600 emails a day, there is not one that I have sent that has gone unanswered for more than a day. He truly is a master juggler- I don't know how he sleeps at all, let alone how he mentors our team, works as the president of a nonprofit that inspires hundreds of kids to pursue STEM across the Merrimack Valley, and leads his younger childrens' scouting programs. Still, with all these things on his plate, he manages to care about each and every one of us whole-heartedly. Not only is he a mentor to us in STEM, but he makes sure we are all doing well in both school and at home. This is not an easy task for someone with such a large and spread out team, and yet he has never missed a beat. If one of us is injured or sick, we have learned to expect that Mike will be sending 601 emails that day, the last one making sure we are okay. Furthermore, Mike fosters the connections between different age levels of students. Many students on our team benefit from the opportunity of mentoring the FLL Jr. Teams. For several of us, this has allowed us to start following in Mike's massive footsteps and spreading STEM in the community ourselves.

Mike is also a massive inspiration in his dedication to spreading STEM. Two years ago, he took the initiative in starting Merrimack Valley Robotics Inc. - an organization that has formed over 24 FLL Jr. Teams in the area. The seeds he has planted in these programs have grown into flourishing programs at many schools across the Merrimack Valley, including many schools that did not have the budget to be able to start the programs on their own. Not only did he lead this effort, but he helps to maintain these programs as new coaches acclimate to the program.

Mike sometimes refers to himself as the team's lead floor sweeper, and while he does help clean up our literal messes of screws and bolts, he also helps sweep up the figurative ones. His passion and creativity in design inspires us to think outside the box, and his skill and knowledge in engineering helps sweep us back into the box when we have overreached.

There are very few people in the world as dedicated to inspiring other people as Mike Johnston; his enthusiasm, leadership, and collaboration skills have set an example that each and everyone of us would be proud to follow.