

## Spotlight on Dave Butler



This week we talked to Dave Butler, who supervises the field for FRC competitions and was once a mentor for FRC team 1533.

### **How long have you been volunteering for *FIRST*?**

In the fall of 2005, our middle son Casey was beginning high school at The Early College at Guilford and had attended a club fair when he found out about *FIRST* and a *FIRST* Robotics Competition (FRC) team beginning its second year. He decided to join the team. It sounded like a wonderful program that I could enjoy as well, so I also met with the team leaders and joined on as a mentor. I knew very little at that time how exciting and rewarding *FIRST* and especially FRC would become for me. Attending the Peachtree Regional in 2006 for "Aim High" had me hooked on FRC and helping students make the most of this opportunity. Our youngest son, Matt, joined FRC team 1533 the following year as an 8th grader and continued on the team through the 2010 season when North Carolina held its inaugural FRC Regional Competition. In 2010 I volunteered to be the Field Supervisor for the North Carolina Regional. I continued as both the Field Supervisor for the NC FRC Regional and as an adult mentor with FRC team 1533, Triple Strange through the 2011 season when I was honored by my team to receive the highly coveted Woodie Flowers Finalist award. This was and is a tremendous source of honor and pride for me, especially since it was awarded to me by none other than Woodie Flowers himself. After the 2011 season, I stepped down from my position with Triple Strange and became a member of the *FIRST* NC Planning Committee continuing to work with expanding the reach for FRC within the state of NC. I continue to be a Field Supervisor with *FIRST* NC and am developing a cadre of other Field Supervisors as we continue to grow in our current District Competition model.

### **What inspired you to become a volunteer?**

I initially joined with *FIRST* as I thought that it would be a great way to have fun being involved with my sons. Within the first year, I saw the immense opportunities that *FIRST* provides for students and knew that I had to do what I could to help it grow. And grow it has. In NC alone I have seen FRC grow from 5 teams to

around 60 in just the 11 years that I have been privileged to be a part of *FIRST*. I recall much discussion in my initial years about someday having enough teams to be able to hold a Regional in NC. Now to see that accomplished and in fact grow beyond that to having become a "District" is no less than amazing.

**What is your favorite part about volunteering?**

My favorite part of volunteering is working with the students and seeing what they come up with to overcome them, what at first seem like insurmountable, challenges when each game is released in January. The drive and enthusiasm of the students are very contagious and I love to be able to see firsthand the fruits of their efforts at the competitions. Each year the new game presents challenges for the volunteers as well. As the games have become more complex, there is much more to be coordinated between matches to reset the field for each competition. I thoroughly enjoy these challenges as I know all of the Field Reset volunteers do.

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

For those new volunteers, those considering volunteering, and those who don't think they have what it takes to volunteer, I have this advice: This is an opportunity to be amazed at what the future leaders for our world hold. I have never regretted a single moment of the time I have volunteered. Every one of us has skills to share with others. We are not all engineers, computer programmers, or whatever you might think is required to be a "good" volunteer for *FIRST*. My personal background is that of a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, and though there is little relationship between robots and delivering anesthesia, I find plenty of my other life experiences to share with these students. There are leadership and organizational skills, thinking outside of the traditional box, and questioning if limitations are real or imagined, that I have tried to impart to countless students. There are so many roles within each team, many that have nothing to do directly with science and technology, where everyone can contribute to helping these students learn and grow. I have also learned greatly from these students who I always claim are much smarter than I am (and I have always considered myself to be pretty smart).



