

316 – Mike Marandola

Name of person submitting nomination: Nate Simpkins

Team 316 LuNaTeCs wishes to acknowledge the extraordinary commitment, energy, and skill of Mentor Mike Marandola through the submission of this nomination for the 2017 Mike Wade Duel Master Award. Once a LuNaTeC, always a LuNaTeC! Mike began his journey with FIRST as a 316 team member in 2007. After graduating high school he continued to offer the team regular support as an alumni mentor while pursuing a degree in engineering. This summer we welcomed him to the role of Lead Technical Mentor.

What makes a FIRST mentor extraordinary? Mike makes a meaningful difference in the lives of students, other mentors, and his community. His enthusiasm spreads throughout the workshop. Ryan H. shares, "Mike has inspired me to build quality parts and have pride in what I'm building." His passion for FIRST was noticed by a college grant committee who recently invited Mike to collaborate on a plan to start FIRST robotics teams to reach underserved populations of students in Southern NJ counties. "Mike shows the utmost respect regardless of rank, and makes all mentors feel valued," remarked team manager, Kathy Simpkins.

We, the students on team 316, are the beneficiary of the exceptional efforts Mike makes to build genuine relationships with each one of us. He makes it a priority to communicate in a way that ensures each student reaches their full potential in the areas of self-worth, service to others, and development of their potential within the various fields of STEM. Whether in the workshop, at competition, or meeting with sponsors or community partners, Mike's commitment, energy, and skill mixed with a humble attitude, clearly communicates the message of FIRST -- It's about more than just the robot. It's about valuing people, inspiring people, and helping all to see themselves as being part of the solution to a better future for all.

You're naturally drawn to positive qualities in another person. When you come across someone who displays such genuine characteristics, it makes you aspire to be the best that you that you can possibly be. Mike dedicates his time to teach us what we love, and he's passionate about doing it. He's always looking for opportunities to that provide lessons in Gracious Professionalism.

Most recently when asked to share our workshop with a newly formed FTC team (including during Build Season!) Mike acknowledged the challenge, but confidently stated, "It's worth it to expose them to FRC. If they see what our team is like during Build Season, the chance of them continuing on in FIRST is much greater."

Students on our team quickly learn it's not just about the robot. He challenges us to self educate through excellent resources such as Chief-Delphi, and encourages us to collaborate with other teams because every team has something valuable we can learn from. As we spend off season designing, engineering, and donating adaptive devices, Mike is continually reminding us we can make a difference in the lives of others when we

get involved. There's more to leadership than having a title and being in charge of a team. Being a leader is not about authority. It's about being able to guide, motivate, and lead others successfully. Mike is an example to all of us -- nothing that has more impact in the life of another than someone who is genuine, someone who remains teachable, and someone who is passionate about seeing others reach their full potential.