

2004 Woodie Flowers Nomination – Paul Slaby

Scott Walls

Mr. Slaby is the kind of man you'd expect to see more in a boot camp than mentoring a high school robotics team. However, he has helped me and the team more than anyone else ever could. He knows what he's doing. That much is a given. What it comes down to, however, is that he makes us know what we're doing. He could go off and build the robot himself; I'm sure he could do it easily. He doesn't, though. He tells us what to do, how to do it, and we go off and do it just like he said. From then on, we know what to do, and we know how to do it well. If we do it wrong, we get corrected. We are often corrected in a stern manner. We never forget what he tells us ever again. When Mr. Slaby says something, it sticks to you like nothing else could. Thanks to Paul, we are all going to not only know what to do, but we are going to know how to learn from what we've done wrong better than ever before. So I thank Mr. Slaby, for everything he's taught me and the team.

Jim Liu

Mr. Slaby is not a man you want to mess with. However, he makes sure you get the job done. He teaches you how to use the machines, and you remember. Later, he just tells you to do something, and you know how, because he made sure you knew. When you get it wrong, he will correct you, often very sternly, but he is just making sure you know what you are doing. He does not want you to get hurt when you are working on the machines. He is a very good mentor, and has done a good job teaching the team.

Jason Lewer

Paul Slaby is not your traditional robotics mentor. You won't find him standing with his arms crossed giving pointers from a distance. One might observe him as more of a team member than a mentor. As a machinist Paul is used to being hands on. He isn't afraid to jump right in your face and show you how to use the lathe or other pieces heavy machinery. However, Paul won't make the part for you. When I first came to work with Paul at Siemens I was mechanically inept so to speak. I couldn't tell the difference between a lathe and a drill press. In fact I was a little intimidated by all the ominous metal tools. When I first met Paul I was a little scared as well. That fear soon faded when he made a joke that had something to do with a soldering iron. In the years following that day Paul taught me everything I needed to know about machining. I went from knowing nothing to being able to do precision lathe work. I am grateful for all that Paul has shown me, not only about robotics but about life as well.

Matthew Benoit

As a team mentor Paul Slaby has been all that any team could ask for. Throughout my two seasons as a member of the Adams Robotic team, there always been one person to whom I could relate. He may be tough around the edges but Paul is a kind, brilliant person who won't let you skim the surface of any project. He makes you dive in, teaching you what to do without doing the work for you, and he will help you to accomplish a goal which may seem extremely unreachable to the average person, unaffiliated with robotics. Paul has done an excellent job balancing his day job as a machinist at Siemens VDO and volunteering towards the completion of the robot. All in all, Paul is an asset to our robotics team; without him and his devotion, there is no way we would ever be able to compete in the FIRST robotics season.

Alex Piazza

Mr. Paul Slaby was a very helpful mentor. He made working on the robot a fun learning experience. As we progressed in the building process he taught me, and others how to us the Bridgeport Machines. He has provided me with a wealth of knowledge about how to work with the milling Machine, and allowed me, and others to gain experience on it. For this we are eternally grateful. Thanks.

Carrie Hauser

When FIRST started, I still felt like I didn't know anything about robots. Even though I had no clue what I was doing, I still attended any meetings at Siemens that I could. The first build meeting that I went to I didn't know anyone and basically sat in a corner because I also didn't know anything I could do to help out. Mr. Slaby saw that I wasn't doing anything so he came up to me and told me to be his running assistant. He kept me busy and taught me different things about machines, tools, and robots. He is a great mentor. He always tries to think up enough jobs so that no one is idle. Also, if there is a project to do, instead of doing it himself, he will work with a student for however long is needed till they know how to do the job themselves. I regret that I won't be here next year to work with him again.

Braden Leinbach

At first, it was awkward coming to Siemens to work in the shop. I felt alienated, and I had absolutely no clue what I was supposed to do! Consequently, I literally didn't get to do anything at the first Siemens meeting. However, Mr. Slaby couldn't stand to see somebody wasting air in his shop—next time I came, he set me right to work. He has since taught me the use of two new machines and countless smaller tools. Without Mr. Slaby, I have no doubt that I would still be wondering what I was doing here!

Daniel Demp

Paul Slaby was a great mentor for me and our team. Although I didn't work with him too much, the time I did spend around him was very beneficial and enlightening. He helped me learn how to work many machines I'd never seen before, and he enhanced my overall understanding of Robotics. I am very grateful for his involvement with our team, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who owes him many thanks. Thank you Mr. Slaby for all that you did for us, and I wish you the best of luck with next year's robot. I'm sure with your help, our team will do great at FIRST next year.

Katrin Augustyniak

Mr. Slaby is a wonderful mentor. He is very interactive with the students. Everyone on the team loves him! Not only does he become friends with all the team members, but he also teaches everyone how to use the machines and gives us all something to do so that we all feel like part of the team. We all help out in building the robot because of him. He is a wonderful mentor and should receive the Woodie Flower Award!

Chris Springer

I personally think that Mr. Slaby is a good man who gives up his free time to spend at Siemens helping us in any way to accomplish completing our robot. He not only tells us how to use machinery but shows us how to. I am grateful that we have Mr. Slaby to help us this year.

Jeff Rogers

In the past 26 years, we have changed through 4 teacher mentors, 8 engineers, and about 16 parents. We have had only one Paul Slaby throughout. He has been a strong mentor since the start of our team. He truly enjoys mentoring us, and the sincerity of his voice is piercing. He has always shown our team and his fellow mentors respect, and he has the courage to speak up when someone is being an idiot. He is always willing to teach us about a new tool, and he constantly thinks about safety. Mr. Slaby has a common sense way of doing things that is refreshing and not very often seen.

Hayley Lawson

Mr. Slaby is a funny guy, he always makes me feel very comfortable when we are working at Siemens through his positive attitude and joking manner. Paul always has a positive attitude about everything and makes everyone's day brighter. Mr. Slaby has always treated me just as if I was on the same level as him, he never makes anyone feel or seem inferior.

Riva Das

Paul Slaby is the embodiment of a perfect mentor when it comes to robotics and life in general. During the past four years of my membership on the Adams robotics team, I have gotten to know Paul both personally and professionally. As an aspiring scientist, I was privileged to work with such a dedicated and skilled engineer as Paul. I recall the difficulties I faced as a freshman in trying to become more involved, but with Paul, it was never a struggle. By assigning particular tasks to individuals and requesting senior members of the team to assist newcomers, Paul gave everyone an equal chance of participation in building the robot. Aside from providing assistance on the weekends, he worked endless hours during the week for no personal compensation. Paul's amicable nature and awesome sense of humor ease the stresses a tight building schedule can generate, and make robotics so much more fun. The advice and experiences I have gained from working with Paul Slaby are priceless, and will continue to influence my life in the near future and beyond.

John Dong

Being on the robotics team for two years, I've met many engineers and robotics experts. Mr. Slaby is the greatest of them all. He has a unique way of showing me how to do something, while letting me do it at the same time. When we are bored and down, Mr. Slaby's sharp and witty humor always brings us right back up. Thanks for mentoring us, Mr. Slaby!

Rick Drummer

Mr. Paul Slaby is a pleasure to work with and observe. He does a fantastic job in helping the young adults on the team learn about machining, including proper safety protocols. I feel confident that Paul will look out for the welfare of the students and know that, when he is in charge, they are in good hands. I work with many adult volunteers, therefore, it is with much experience that I can say that Mr. Slaby is one of the best communicators I have ever encountered. I look forward to working with Paul every year, and look forward to his continued participation with the team. He is a great mentor and a good friend who truly makes a difference.

Peter Pirozzo

On behalf of the parents I would like to say thank you for all you have done for our kids over the past six years. You have been both their mentor and their friend. You have helped them learn first hand about what can be accomplished when they work together. You have helped them make their sometimes weird ideas into realities. You have helped open new doors for them. You have taught them how to work with their hands as well as their minds. And you have been patient with them throughout. You have spent countless hours with our children instead of your own family and for this we are truly grateful. You have made a difference in their lives and in ours and for this we will always remember you. Thank you for caring about our children and taking the time to show it.

Grace Drummer

Paul, what can I say but Thank you! I have had the chance to work with you with the Robotics Team for 5 years now. What an awesome experience. You have tolerated SO much over the years and you keep coming back. The kids love working with you and so do the parents and other mentors. Your unique form of communications, your directness, and your patience make you the mentor the team could not do without. Thanks for making things fun, interesting, comical and simply a blast. Thanks for putting in so much time with the kids. They have a wonderful role model in you.

Dave Pirozzo

Paul is an amazing tutor, but an even more amazing friend. If he doesn't manage to scare you away the first time that you meet him, you will realize how much he is capable of helping you not only with robotics, but with making your first step into the real world. I know that I will remember Paul for many years to come, though I may have a sudden case of amnesia when he comes around looking for money.

Kevin Schalte

Thank you so much for being our mentor this year. Through thick and thin, you've supported us and helped us. It's been a great year, and although our luck ran thin with partner selections, it's been very fun. On a personal note, thank you for the help in the shop, teaching me mechanical skills that I can use in the future on the team and in a career. I hope you come back and stay with us for another great and successful year!

Rich Schuster

Paul Slaby, the mentor of the Adams Robotics Team, is truly an awesome mentor. He is the type of guy who will let us try our own thing, just as long as we don't kill ourselves, which is a very good thing, because death is never fun. Although, thinking of all people, Paul could make it fun. Paul is always joking and positive, and never will give up because things aren't working for him. He is always searching for the simplest solution to a problem, and many a time he has pointed out how much simpler it is to use the proper tool. Our team has been lucky to have such an awesome mentor for its entirety, staying through the different teachers and generations of kids.

Have a nice Day!