

## Spotlight on Angie Barger, Sr. Volunteer Coordinator Extraordinaire!



This month we are excited to shine the Volunteer Spotlight on Angie Barger. Angie has been one of our most dedicated, committed, always-there-to-be counted-on volunteers since bringing a *FIRST* Robotics Competition event to North Carolina. As our Sr. Volunteer Coordinator, over 2,000 volunteers have interacted with Angie in some way. And she always supplies the best treats and snacks! Thanks for all you do, Angie!

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

I started mentoring part time in 2007. I have been volunteering at events since 2010.

### *What positions have you held?*

I have been a Volunteer Coordinator for NC since 2011. I have also served in Pit Admin and Safety Glass tables as well as filling in to give breaks to folks at the practice field, inspection managers, machine shop admin, and any other role where I'm needed. I served as one of the Pit VCs at the *FIRST* Championships back in 2012 and 2013. And of course, I've been on the Planning Committee for NC since about 2 weeks prior to our very first Regional event back in 2010. Oh! I also do a lot of the posting to our *FIRST* NC Facebook page.

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

Hard benches without back support. LOL! Actually, I got involved initially because I started dating someone who was already 5 years into mentoring teams. You might know him since he is now my husband and our Sr Lead Robot Inspector, Lee Barger. Anyway, the more I learned about the program, the more excited I got about how the kids were learning and working together. I also wanted to make sure that the girls out there SEE women in engineering fields. I have a degree in chemical engineering and work as an environmental engineer with the state of NC. And while neither of those things have anything to do with robotics, I can provide a sounding board for ideas and help with organization. On the event side, I saw a need and wanted to help. As we began the adventure of becoming *FIRST* NC, I wanted to share my passion for increasing diversity on all levels and get as many kids as possible across this state involved. I really try hard to make sure we have a very diverse staff of volunteers at our events, particularly in our key roles so that every kid out there sees someone like them that they can aspire to be. I know we have a lot of gaps, so if you can fill one of those, please know that you will be welcomed with open arms!

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

Hands down, it is the people! I LOVE working with the other volunteers who want nothing more than to make every event the most inspiring thing these students attend. I love seeing the excitement of the teams that accomplish something they never thought possible: whether that is winning an event or fixing a broken part in less than 6 minutes or building an entire robot over the course of 3 days with the help of all the teams around them.

***How has volunteering helped you (career, job, life in general, etc...)?***

I have made a lot of amazing friends with robots. I also find that I practice a lot of skills that I learn from my work with robotics folks and vice versa. Having an inspirational volunteer opportunity outside of my work life makes me a happier, more focused employee. And I have fun telling my co-workers about the team and events.

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

Try it out! We have jobs that require nothing more than a positive attitude and a willingness to help. We also have some much more technical roles that require those skills that we are teaching the kids. Being a mentor doesn't prevent you from volunteering. We can always use folks on load-in the day before competition starts up to get the teams through inspection, get the field properly installed, and to troubleshoot connection and programming issues. I'd love to see a lot more alumni coming back to volunteer at events! It is a great way to stay connected to the *FIRST* family and it is an amazing way to network with professionals who might just be able to help you get the first or next job in your chosen field.

*Any favorite stories or anecdotes to share?*

My favorite stories all involve alumni stepping up and giving back! I watched David VanLeeuwen go from my first team's Captain, to a Referee, to our Head Ref and now he is a Judge in Texas. I watched Luke Ziemba go from an enthusiastic freshman who loved helping out on field reset so he could pepper the AV crew with all his many many questions to now working for that AV company running most of our events. I've watched Michaela Settle go from a student on one team to starting her own to being one of our amazing scorekeepers and now CSAs all while now being the main coach for yet another team! There more just like them out there and I hope to see many, many more. Alumni know the program better than anyone. They understand how *FIRST* affects lives, because their lives were affected!

