

Tony English helps us discover skills that would be impossible without his guidance and encouragement as The Highlanders 4499 mentor. Experts under his tutelage, we recognize new talents, passion and drive.

Tony graduated from CSU with a ME degree as a commissioned officer. In 2004 he returned from Iraq, a decorated veteran, only to start a 6th company, Neaera Consulting, and to build his dream shop that has become a place to create masterpieces, construct projects and change lives. Here, 4499 develop dreams, forever friendships and pursue passions; we won't forget this special sanctuary.

For 16 years, Tony has expressed his love for FIRST through volunteering as head ref for Liberty's qual(10y) and mentoring FLL(8y), FTC(2y), and FRC(9y) teams. Over the years, success has come in many ways: large scholarships, engineering discoveries and project assistance.

Tony started the Highlanders with one goal: accessibility without pecuniary hindrance. We only require curiosity, motivation and snacks. Tony's professional vision includes inspiring students by explaining his work. As an expert in the Connected and Automated vehicles field, he offers internships to students. Part of their profits go back to our non-profit. This serves as part of the 4499's organization structure; to date, Tony has hired 6 students donating over 130,000 to Neaera Robotics.

Our favorite aspect of Tony, more than his generosity and dedication, is his "hands off and let the kids work" philosophy. This allows us to find our path despite difficulty. But in failure, Tony comes to guide us. He grants us to become experts by teaching, guiding and allowing us to stumble, only to see us flourish.

For Tony, FIRST is a lifestyle; to us, Tony is a FIRST champion. He teaches kids important life skills, not just for a robotics season. As a Highlander, we are a part of his family-his robot family. Did we mention that this shop is in his home? Even this season, COVID-19 hasn't stopped his support and devotion. He allows us into his home with precautions to foster our growth despite challenging circumstances. He foresaw how his students would struggle in a virtual environment and utilized his shop, structure and consistency to aid us. We are trusted teens spending countless hours doing homework, eating team dinners, and even spending the night! Tony has truly inspired us all to follow a path of engineering and love it. When asked about STEM-focused education, Tony said, "You kids are going to go out and solve some of the hardest problems in the world. I think the best way to prepare for that is to start solving really hard problems now."

Tony hasn't started hundreds of FIRST teams, but his goal is to deeply impact a few lives each year. He has inspired over 150 kids through vis-a-vis robotics mentorship. He continues to embolden engineers to share their knowledge hundreds of miles from the shop. The thousands of kids Tony has impacted by his work over the years can't be calculated.