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Organizing a "Back to Build" Mentors-Only Dinner

Hosted by the Baltimore Area Alliance (BAA)

The BAA is a community of practice of FRC teams created in 2006. www.firstbaa.org
For more information on what a community of practice is: <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/>

History:

- Since 2007, the BAA has hosted an event at the end of week 1 or 2 of the *FIRST* Robotics Competition build season. For 2 years this was a team/mentor fundraising and publicity event. Outback sponsored, and teams were each given a certain number of tickets to sell, and each team kept all money raised. Pure profit! Outback retired as a sponsor, but the BAA recognized the value of having a shared mentor information session over dinner.

Date: Held Week 1-2 of the FRC build season.

Agenda:

- The key is to invite speakers who can help answer questions. We invite the Head Ref and Lead Inspector. We've also included the Judge Advisor, Volunteer Coordinator, the *FIRST* Senior Mentor for Maryland and the Regional Director.
- Based on past years, there will be a lively discussion on the pros and cons of various strategies, a check of the rules, a chance to point the way to resources and the opportunity to ask dozens of questions. It is a valuable and fun discussion! The mentors also have the opportunity to network and meet other mentors.
- There are lots of questions this time of the year. Although the initial reaction is "one more thing to do" it's turned into a FUN event. Because there are no students, the mentors can ask questions in an open environment with their peers. Some of the best suggestions may come from the other mentors.

Agenda:

6:30 - Set up

6:45-7:15 - mentors arrive and get dinner. Eat during presentations.

7:15-7:30 - Welcome and intros

7:30-8:45 - Q & A.

8:45-9:00 - BAA meeting. All welcome to stay.

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Communication:

We have the support of the Regional Director and Senior Mentor to be able to forward out information to all Maryland FRC teams. We have used Eventbrite free invitations to help manage registrations. We also have invites in the packets given out to teams at our local kickoff in Maryland. Invites also posted on mdFIRST.org website.

Venue: We have held at a variety of local high schools. In 2013 the JHU Applied Physics Lab has offered us cafeteria space.

Participants: All FRC mentors in Maryland are invited. In 2012, 50+ mentors from 16 FRC teams participated. We make sure everyone is wearing an inexpensive name tag and try to do brief introductions. Contact information is collected and updated at the door.

Food: If there is a sponsor, the meal can be complementary or a small fee can be charged. In the past the BAA has used: sandwich trays from Wegman's, and water/chips/vegetables, fruit/cookies from warehouse stores. When Outback sponsored, it was steak and chicken. We have had potlucks, as well as fried chicken buckets.

Costs: Plan on \$5/pp. The BAA sponsors, but asks mentors to RSVP in advance.

Decisions that need to be made:

- Venue-can your space be donated? Do you have to pay for custodian?
- Supplies-Any handouts used by presenters, plates, cups, plastic ware, paper towels, tablecloths
- Food –Do you want to have sponsors or ask for participants to pay?
- Organizational time - Eventbrite is free. It does take a cut if you collect money online, but can be used just for registration. Key volunteers see the value in the event, so agree to participate.

Happy to answer any questions!

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