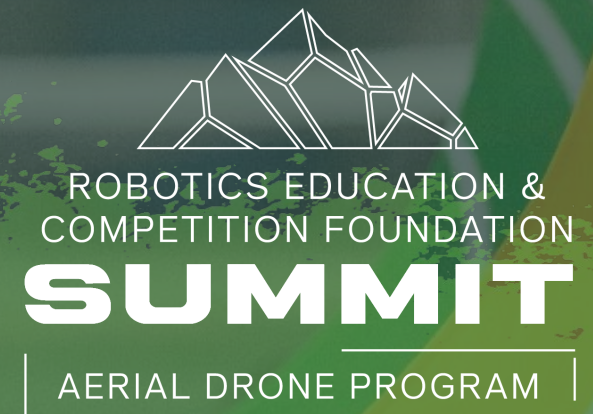


# EVENT PARTNER ROUNDTABLE: Sharing Best Practices

Presented by:

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Ohio



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Massachusetts



Nicki Manion  
Indiana



Brian Rowland  
Florida

Aerial Drone Competition

# Meet Our Panel

Time to hear from Event Partners!

# Best Practices from Edward Kay



Edward Kay, Naval Science Instructor,  
Oxford High School, Oxford MA

## GOAL:

Your goal is to host a fun, engaging, and successful tournament, which aligns with the team coaches' goals.

## Expect the Best, Prepare for the Worst

I always test and practice with my equipment, but I also have backup, sometimes more than one. I always prefer that the electronic scoring systems will work and the tablets talk to the server, but I always have a printed backup for manual scoring. I also like to have additional backups for electronics, extra SD cards for the Raspberry Pi's, extra cables, and replacement printer cartridges.

## Meetings and Communication with volunteers go a long way to success.

Once I have the referees and judges set, I schedule a meeting a week out to provide a run-down of expectations and answer questions. Then I ask them to be there the night before for a 30-minute walk-through after we set up the tournament area.

## Realize that you're not alone.

The coaches that I've worked with have been great resources for materials, advice, and they may have seen more tournaments than you and can provide recommendations for overcoming a problem.

I have hosted four events to date, and every time, the attending coaches have been a great resource. They are incredibly understanding and supportive.

## Stay Flexible, Keep it Fun

Even with the best planning, something unexpected will happen. Adapt, smile, and focus on the big picture: creating a positive experience for students.

# Best Practices from LTC Odell A. Graves



Lieutenant Colonel (Dr.) Odell A. Graves graduated and received his commission as an Infantry Officer from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. After more than 23 years of service in the Army, he was selected as the Senior Army Instructor and Robotics Instructor/Coach at Trotwood-Madison High School, located in Ohio. Odell has served as the Robotics Coach for 7 years (VEX for 7 years and Drones for 3 years) and instructor for 5 years.

## Read Everything in the EP Library—and Follow It

Relying on memory or outdated materials can cause confusion, misjudging, or even challenges.

Complete the **EP Certification**—it's not just required, it's a comprehensive walkthrough of expectations and logistics.

## Practice RECFevents with Your IT Person—Early

At least **two weeks before your event**, walk through the RECFevents system with your tech support or IT person.

You don't want to be learning or troubleshooting the system the night before—or worse, the morning of—the event. Practice registering teams, scheduling matches, updating scores, and projecting match results.

## Train Judges and Referees On-Site the Day Before

Invite judges and referees to come the day prior, and have a team demonstrate the competition - **let referees practice scoring**.

Great time for the judge advisor to **train the judges** and review processes for using rubrics.

Referees can go through mock matches and test the scoring app live.

## Set Up Everything You Can the Day Before

**EVERYTHING YOU CAN** - and test it. (including a printer)

Last-minute setup introduces stress and delays. When you arrive on event day, your focus should be on people, not equipment.

## Rest *Before* the Event—Not the Night Before

Get plenty of rest 2 days before the event, as the night before - forget about it.

You won't sleep much the night before—guaranteed. Your brain will be in "checklist mode," thinking through cables, batteries, rubrics, and referees.

# Best Practices from Nicki Manion



Nicki Manion serves as the lead for Educational Outreach partnerships at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology, where she coordinates STEM initiatives. With a background in education and program leadership, she specializes in building sustainable, hands-on learning experiences through competitions, workshops, and educator training.

## Gentle Lift-Off

As a one-woman wolf pack – channeling inner Alan from The Hangover—

**I hosted a scrimmage before the official qualifying event to give myself a much-needed practice run.**

It paid off, since many of the teams from the scrimmage also competed in the qualifier and were already familiar with the venue.

## Call the Control Tower for Clearance

Flying solo means **leaning on experienced EPs and REC Foundation staff early is crucial** to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Shelli Brasher was a huge help throughout planning and even joined our campus meeting with different departments, answering questions I knew I couldn't.

## We're Cleared for Takeoff

I consider myself pretty organized, but even with my skills, I knew things would go a little haywire—

**so the goal was to keep it fun, flexible, and student-focused.**

When everyone's enjoying themselves, little glitches don't matter as much.

Definitely take notes on what works and what doesn't for next time.

**It won't be perfect—even for seasoned EPs—but learning from each event makes the next one better.**

I've only hosted one REC Foundation event so far— so I'm no seasoned pro, but I survived with my sanity (mostly) intact.

With a mix of planning, panic, and post-it notes,

**here are a few best practices that helped me fake it 'til I make it.**

# Best Practices from Brian Rowland



Brian Rowland has been a Drone coach and teacher for two years at Don Estridge High Tech Middle School in Florida, and has eight years of experience coaching and hosting robotics tournaments. He currently hosts two drone events each year and is a Regional Support Specialist for drones in Florida.

## Make Personal Contact With Coaches

Coaches are more likely to ask questions, show up on time, and promote good sportsmanship if they feel connected to the Event Partner.

In ADC, where events might be newer to teams, that personal touch helps everyone feel supported and informed.

## Recruit Alumni for Volunteers

Former competitors are often excited to stay involved and give back.

Having volunteers who "get it" improves the quality of judging, refereeing, and tech support.

## Train Judges - and Let Them Practice Questioning

Don't just send the judging guide and call it done. Host a judge training session where they can role-play interviews and review team notebooks in a mock setting.

Confidence and consistency among judges lead to better experiences for students.

## Maintain a Consistent Cadre of Judges

Try to work with the same core group of judges across multiple events.

Keep a running list of judges who've performed well, thank them personally, and invite them early for future events.

## Helps being married to a certified judge!

While not everyone can do this 😊, having a judge in the family—or close circle—can be a huge help.

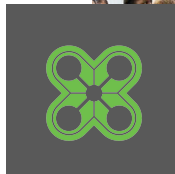
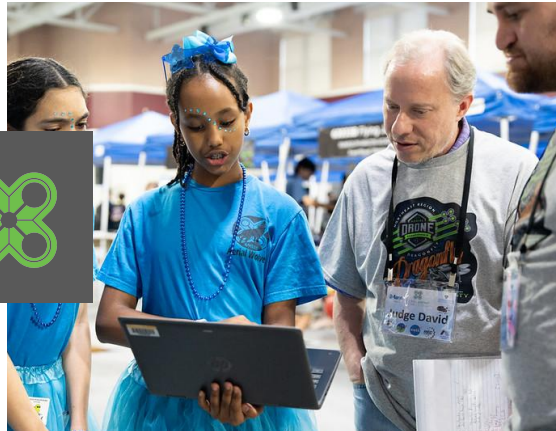
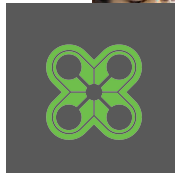
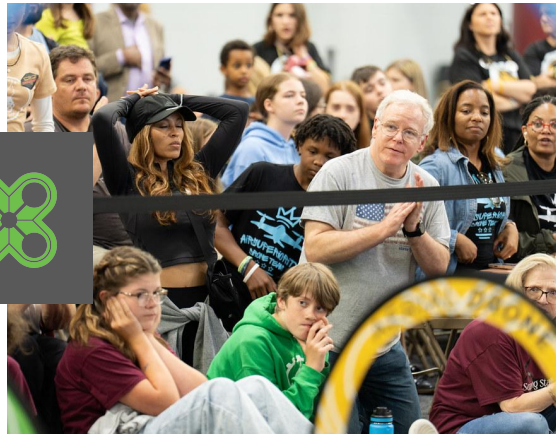
Judging can be a challenging role to fill, especially for newer ADC events. Encouraging friends, family, or community members to go through the certification process gives you a reliable fallback and strengthens your local judging pool.



# Discussion: Share your Tips and Resources

# Resources for Event Partners

Aerial Drone Competition



## Event Partners and Volunteers

- Getting Started
- Planning
- Running Events
- Volunteers
- RECF Events
- EP Resources and References

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## Equipment

- Field Element Kits
- Game Element Kits
- Audio/Visual
- Administrative
- Hospitality
- Awards

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## TOP REQUESTED RESOURCE

- The Go-To Toolkit for Coaches and Event Partners

# Contact

## We are here for you

If you need any further information about our drone program, one of our staff members will be able to assist you. You can contact us via email or phone, and our team will be happy to help. Additionally, you can visit our website for more details.

### Address

1519 Interstate 30 West  
Greenville, Texas 75402

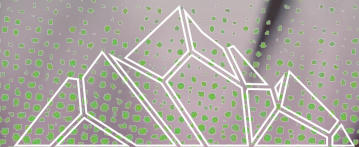
### Phone & Email

903 401 8010  
drones@recf.org

### Website

[drones.recf.org](https://drones.recf.org)

### Resources



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