



State of Wisconsin
Department of Public Instruction
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

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Burmaster announces 13 Business Friend of Education awards

Record number of businesses and individuals recognized for partnerships supporting education

MADISON—State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster announced 13 Business Friend of Education awards in conjunction with the 71st annual Wisconsin Association of Career and Technical Education Conference held March 1-2 in Appleton.

“Business partnerships are the foundation of successful school and work initiatives in our PK-12 educational system,” she said. “Work-based learning empowers students to apply academic and technical knowledge in a business or industry setting, which helps them prepare for their future roles in the 21st century global workforce.”

Awards were presented to

Dan Bruso, plant manager of the **Oldenburg Group**, for the partnership with Rhinelander High School. Bruso developed a supervised work-experience program in welding in which students come to his Lakeshore plant to gain the hands-on experiences they need to succeed in the manufacturing and engineering fields.

Festival Foods of New London, where **Mike and Ted Coppersmith** have been partnering with the school district since 1999. Festival Foods works with the high school’s agriculture department, as well as the FFA, in co-sponsoring many events. Additionally, more than 20 percent of the store’s workforce is made up of students from New London High School.

KI Manufacturing for its eight-year partnership with Green Bay area schools, providing quality learning experiences for students. **John Rank** was recognized for serving as a mentor for Youth Apprenticeship students and supporting hands-on-learning in the areas of manufacturing, machining, and drafting.

Kohler Credit Union for its more than 10-year commitment to a career and technical education partnership with Sheboygan area schools; its support of an in-house credit union at Sheboygan South High School, which fosters financial literacy; and its sponsorship of co-op students to run the high school credit union branch, which provides work-based learning experiences. Accepting the award were **Mike Schmidt, Tony Klokow, and Lance Tihauser**.

(more)

Ellen Lichte of **St. Mary's Manor** for more than 15 years of contributing to the South Milwaukee High School Family and Consumer Education Program. Lichte instructs students, who are working on their Certified Nursing Assistant Program, and works side-by-side with them at St. Mary's Manor, providing their clinical experience for certification.

Robert and Denise Mantz from **Mantz Automation** for their more than 20-year-partnership with Hartford Union High School. Their commitment to all areas of work-based learning and Youth Apprenticeship provides students with experiences in computer-aided design and engineering. Many of their students pursue further education in manufacturing and engineering.

Audra Mead, who through her work at **West Bend Mutual Insurance**, provides Kewaskum students the chance to enroll in the State Certified Co-Op Program. These mentorship students gain a better understanding of the insurance industry as well as opportunities to develop life-long employment and career skills. Work-based learning opportunities between West Bend Mutual and Kewaskum High School have been active for more than 10 years.

Deb Mulry and Chris Cohorst from **The Packer Pro Shop** for welcoming students, including students with disabilities, to their work-based programs. Throughout the last four years, students from Green Bay area schools have worked in all aspects of the business, including merchandising, pricing, and customer service. Additionally, each student is paired with a mentor to achieve greater learning.

Red Cedar Medical, represented by **Mary Kerg**, for its health care partnership with Menomonie High School's Senior Internship Program. Students in the internship program are exposed to all aspects of health care and related occupations. Students working at Red Cedar obtain their certification in Co-Op Skills Standards, Employability Skills, and the Certified Nursing Assistant Program.

Regal Ware Manufacturing, represented by **Debbie Ranthum**, for its 20-year partnership with Kewaskum High School in all areas of work-based learning. The company mentors students in various Youth Apprenticeship programs, giving them the opportunity to learn manufacturing, marketing, and technical aspects of business. While with the company, students experience the value of life-long learning and the importance of integrity, dedication, and pride.

Signicast Corporation of Hartford, lead by **Jim Capadona**, for providing supervised work-experience opportunities for students at Hartford Union High School since 1993. Students learn about tool and die making, automated machining, and manufacturing. The company also sponsors various Skills USA competitions and is involved with "First Robotics."

Gene Wendorff, president of **Steel Craft Corporation**, for partnering with Hartford Union High School. Students in the Hartford Union's Internship Program gain metal fabrication manufacturing opportunities at Steel Craft, which helps them understand the history and the future importance of manufacturing in our state.

Lisa Wilson from the Brown County Clerk of Courts office for mentoring students at Green Bay Southwest High School. Through their work experiences, students gain insight into all aspects of government, including legal issues and the importance of public records.

"These awards, the most presented in any year, recognize true champions from the business community for their involvement in education. I want to commend them for their efforts to increase achievement for all students and close the achievement gap," Burmaster said.

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