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American Welding Society Foundation Receives \$100K Donation from OKI Bering to Help Relieve Shortage of Welders

Miami, FL, January 3, 2008 – The [American Welding Society](#) (AWS) and the [AWS Foundation](#) announced today that it has received a \$100,000 donation from [OKI Bering](#) to help relieve the nationwide shortage of welders. AWS estimates a shortage of at least 200,000 welders by 2010. AWS is the world's largest organization dedicated to advancing the science, technology and application of welding. OKI Bering is a wholesaler of welding, safety and industrial supplies headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio.

The donation was granted to the AWS Foundation Welder Workforce Development Program, which was launched in 2006 to address the critical need for recruitment and specialized training of entry level welders while supporting welding workforce needs for selected companies. The Welder Workforce Development Program is part of the AWS Foundation \$10 million capital campaign, "[Welding for the Strength of America](#)," which is aimed at facilitating programs, scholarships and other initiatives in support of the welding industry. At year-end 2007, the AWS Foundation has raised \$2.6 million toward its campaign effort.

The \$100,000 donation will be granted over a five-year term beginning in 2007. The funds are earmarked for the development of a welding industry career website that allows job-seekers to search and apply online for job opportunities at various levels. In addition, over the next five years OKI Bering will direct all of the company's surplus inventory materials to welding schools across the nation. Welding materials are one of the many critical necessities in school welding programs, but the expense of purchasing materials can be high, and often programs are forced to close due to lack of funding. It is expected that the total inventory to be donated by OKI Bering will amount to over \$1 million dollars.

"OKI Bering's tremendous contribution to the AWS Foundation campaign will enhance our ability to make positive changes in the welding industry, especially in the direction of web-based career exploration," said AWS Foundation chairman Ronald C. Pierce. "In addition, the company's commitment to providing much-needed materials to our nation's welding school programs is unprecedented in our Foundation's history, and it is an extremely important part of helping to relieve this critical problem. The nation wide shortage of welders has been detrimental to manufacturing and businesses will continue to suffer unless we take action immediately as an entire industry to fill this urgent need."

Established in 1937, OKI Bering has over 348,000 square feet of distribution space, including 11 centers throughout the United States and three international facilities. The company is currently the largest independently owned wholesaler of industrial, safety and welding supplies in North America. They sell products only through authorized distributors, including several international locations such as Mexico, South America, Great Britain, Caribbean, Phillipines, Japan, and the Middle East.

About AWS

The American Welding Society (AWS) was founded in 1919 as a multifaceted, nonprofit organization with a mission to advance the science, technology and application of welding and allied joining and cutting processes, including brazing, soldering, and thermal spraying. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, and led by a volunteer organization of officers and directors, AWS serves more than 50,000 members worldwide and is composed of 22 districts with 250 sections and student chapters. For more information, visit the Society's website at <http://www.aws.org> and click on "[pressroom](#)."