AWS Names 2015 Excellence in Welding Award Winners

MIAMI, Fla., November 19, 2015 – The American Welding Society (AWS) and WEMCO, an association of welding manufacturers, have announced the recipients of the 2015 Excellence in Welding Awards. Issued in ten categories, including a new category this year – veterans, these awards recognize individuals and organizations that have shown exemplary dedication to promoting welding in their communities.

The winners were honored at the Excellence in Welding Awards Ceremony which took place on November 11, 2015, at the FABTECH show in Chicago, Ill.

The winners of these prestigious awards are instrumental in raising the image of welding and strengthening the industry.

Following are all the 2015 Excellence in Welding Award winners:

- **Individual – Jason North – Alma, Michigan**
  Jason has more than 23 years’ experience in the welding industry and holds several certifications. In 2007 while working for Merrill Fabricators, Jason became a Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) and one of his responsibilities included giving weld tests to potential new hires. With a passion for welding and noticing a severe decline in the welding skill level of job candidates, Jason grew concerned and in early 2011 approached senior management at Merrill about starting a welding school. The welding school idea became a reality and in October 2011, the Merrill Institute was born. Jason became a Certified Welding Educator (CWE) and is now the Manager of Operations and Industrial Training at the Merrill Institute. The Institute’s welding staff has grown to three welding educators including Jason and a full-time education and training manager. Since the Merrill Institute opened its doors it has graduated over 200 students with an employment placement rate of 89 percent.

- **Educator – Dr. Warren Donworth – Austin, TX**
  Dr. Donworth directs the Austin Community College program in welding inspection and nondestructive testing. Nominated by several of his students, he holds a doctor of philosophy degree in educational administration from the University of Texas, however, he declined to pursue a career in administration, preferring instead to remain in the classroom where he feels has a more direct impact on students. Dr. Donworth started his teaching career at Austin Community College as an adjunct faculty member in 1985, while still working in the industry as an AWS Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) and a nationally examined ASNT Level III in RT, UT, MT, PT. The first course he taught was one he created to prepare career welding students for taking their CWI exam. Thirty years later he is still teaching that same course as well as several others that he has added over the years. While serving as department chair he hired many talented and specialized welding educators and the department has expanded to include numerous unique certificates as well as four Associate of Applied Science degrees in Code Welding, Blacksmithing, Arts Metals, and Jewelry Fabrication, making it one of the country’s most diverse and unusual
welding programs. A coworker and former student of Dr. Donworth wrote that “Doc’s” dedication to his students is inspiring and has led many to careers that changed their lives.

- **Veteran – Lyle Palm – San Diego, CA**
  Lyle graduated from high school with a keen interest in welding and fabricating. He would go on to receive a community college welding certificate in 1980 before joining the U.S. Navy in 1981 as a hull maintenance technician. After a 20 year career in the Navy, Lyle retired in 2001 from active duty as a Senior Chief Petty Officer with the intent of working with his brother in the welding and fabricating business full time. In 2011, Lyle pursued a full time job as a welding instructor and was hired by CACI International as a welding instructor for the U.S. Navy. He currently works as a full-time welding instructor at the Navy’s West Coast Landing Craft Air Cushion base, training sailors and civilians how to weld aluminum and stainless steel. Lyle also teaches welding skills to active duty, veterans and wounded warriors for the non-profit organization Workshops for Warriors where he is the Dean of Welding. Lyle has taken the Workshop for Warriors program to the next level with expertise and dedication. He developed the curriculum, welding processes and implementation of the program and he continues to work closely with business and industry to develop partnerships and ensure the program is meeting the needs of the school and industry.

- **Educational Facility – Workshops for Warriors – San Diego, CA**
  Workshops for Warriors is currently the only accredited 501(c)(3) nonprofit providing U.S. veterans with compressed training, certification, and placement in advanced manufacturing careers. All training is at no cost to veterans and has a 100% job placement rate upon graduation. Since 2011, Workshops for Warriors has graduated almost 200 graduates. The educational facility offers two primary tracks of training: welding and machining. After choosing a track, students embark on a 16-month program, with approximately 112 hours per course. Workshops for Warriors believes that problems like unemployment, homelessness, broken families, and suicide can be avoided if veterans are enabled and empowered with a proven path to a rewarding career.

- **Small Business – Lynch Enterprises LLC – Durango, CO**
  Padraig Lynch is a U.S. Navy veteran, instructor, fabricator and owner of Lynch Enterprises LLC. Through his business, Lynch does metal fabrication and teaches the future welding workforce the necessary skills they need for a career in welding. He set up the welding program at Durango High School and has taught welding at Southwest Community College. A customer of Mr. Lynch wrote that he has the patience, knowledge, and skills to build the self-confidence of his students and employees.

- **Large Business – Bechtel Corporation – San Francisco, CA**
  Bechtel has provided engineering, project management and construction services for over 115 years. With more than 58,000 employees worldwide, Bechtel’s corporate welding program is part of their corporate construction organization headquartered in Houston, Texas. Bechtel believes in hiring local welders and inspectors for projects and is currently working on a program to train people coming out of the military and high schools as welders for employment at their projects on the Gulf Coast. As sustaining corporate members of AWS, there are several Bechtel employees serving on welding advisory boards of local community colleges and vocation schools as well as serving as members of many AWS, ASME and API welding code committees.

- **Distributor – Purity Cylinder Gases – Grand Rapids, MI**
  Purity Cylinder Gases is an independent and locally owned welding supply and gas distributor with over 100 employees and 13 locations throughout Michigan and Northern Indiana. What makes a company great is the people behind the company and Purity Cylinder Gases was nominated by a customer who not only felt that this company was the best one-stop shop that he has visited in his 35 years in the welding industry but he found the company to be great because of his sales contact there, Kevin Kaufmann. The nominator wrote: “When someone does a job in a service industry to the point of which it needs not be checked against other suppliers and that the quality of service is consistent year after year – that person and company need to be thanked.”

- **AWS Section – Los Angeles-Inland Empire Section, Section 8 – Los Angeles, CA.**
  The AWS Los Angeles-Inland Empire Section is the largest in AWS District 21, with approximately 1200 members. The executive board of this section has done an excellent job of reviving what was a dormant section for many years. Out of all District 21 Sections, Section 8 now has the most meetings every year and awards the largest amount of scholarships to local students. The executive board produces a monthly newsletter and has done a great job of building partnerships within the industry, gathering donations of items to raffle off at meetings, and getting sponsors. For the past two years the section’s student chapter in Santa Ana College has hosted two large competitions – Welding Thunder and SkillsUSA.
Media – Jamie Duffy – Fort Wayne, IN
Jaimie Duffy’s article “Welding, A Sure Ticket to Getting a Job” ran in the Fort Wayne Indiana Gazette on March 15, 2015 and highlights the need for welders and the job opportunities available for them. The article can be viewed at: http://www.journalgazette.net/business/Welding-a-sure-ticket-to-landing-a-job-5346591

Exceptional – Mike Rowe
TV Host Mike Rowe received the first-ever Exceptional category award, a special recognition given out by the WEMCO Executive Committee to a person who goes above and beyond to promote welding and the skilled trades industries. Rowe founded The mikeroweWorks Foundation, a public charity that awards ethic scholarships to students pursuing a career in the skilled trades. To date, the Foundation has awarded more than $3 million in scholarships across the country in support of closing the country’s skills gap.

Nominations for the 2016 Excellence in Welding Awards are now open. To submit a nomination please visit www.aws.org/excellenceinwelding.

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 worldwide, including brazing, soldering, and thermal spraying. Headquartered in Miami Florida, and led by a volunteer organization of officers and directors, AWS serves more than 71,000 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.”

About WEMCO
Established in 1996, WEMCO, an Association of Welding Manufacturers serves as an alliance between American Welding Society (AWS), and dozens of manufacturers of welding, cutting and related welding-industry equipment. As a standing committee of AWS, this influential organization is an invaluable source of information and services for welding industry end users, distributors and manufacturers. For nearly 20 years, WEMCO members have enjoyed unparalleled networking opportunities, idea generation and exchange in a noncompetitive atmosphere. For more information visit: http://www.aws.org/wemco

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