AWS Names 2016 Excellence in Welding Award Winners

Miami, Fla., November 16, 2016 – The American Welding Society (AWS), a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the science of welding, and WEMCO, an association of welding manufacturers, have announced the recipients of the 2016 Excellence in Welding Awards.

The awards were issued in eight categories, and recognize individuals and organizations that have excelled in promoting the welding industry in their communities. The winners were honored at the Excellence in Welding Awards Ceremony, which took place on November 16, 2016 at the FABTECH show in Las Vegas, NV.

The following is a list of the winners of this year’s awards:

- **Individual - Uwe Ashemeier**
  
  Uwe started his career in 1977 as a mechanical fitter in Germany before going on to receive a Bachelor's of Science in Mechanical Engineering and then becoming a Certified Welding Engineer through the German Welding Society. In 1995 he immigrated to the United States and has done a tremendous amount of work in the welding industry since then. He currently works as the Senior Welding Engineer for Subsea Global Solutions, a worldwide diving company that specializes in underwater ship repair. His work takes him all around the world auditing the many offices of SGS to
ensure safety in their welding practices. He is also an active member of his local Cincinnati section, having been secretary from 2000 to 2002, and now serving as the Chairman. He's also District Director for District 7 and has been a member of the American Welding Society Board since 2013.

- **Educator - Jeff Imrie**
  Jeff has been in the welding workforce for 40 years - and has worked as a general welder, multi-coded welder, welding foreman, welding instructor, and even a college department head. Throughout his career he has worked on a wide variety of projects - including welding for ships, bridges, drilling vessels, petrochemical plants, oil refineries, and much more. Jeff also works as an educator at Dundee and Angus College in Scotland. He has trained thousands of welding and fabrication students, and is known to partner with each student to create a personalized development plan for them. His commitment to teaching and to his students has led him to design unique courses and programs for various colleges and for the British Council. His dedication to his students does not end at graduation. He is known to work with local and international companies to place his students into welding jobs around the world. Jeff has even traveled the world - mostly to developing nations - to set up educational welding programs and promote the trade.

- **Educational Facility - Rochester Arc + Flame Center**
  Rochester Arc + Flame was the brainchild of Michael Krupnicki - president of Mahany Welding Supply. Between 2002 and 2011, Mahany trained more than three thousand welding students through recreational classes, professional qualification training, and college courses partnered with several local schools. From this, Krupnicki realized there was a need for additional welding and flameworking courses - so he opened the Rochester Arc + Flame Center on January 7th, 2012. The school provides several welding programs - from introductory Saturday workshops in MIG, TIG, and stick to in-depth night courses, credit-earning collegiate courses, and even vocational programs. The center has 85% employment placement within 3 months of graduation. In total 300 students have graduated from Arc + Flame and have worked in 19 states across the U.S. and 3 foreign countries.

- **Veteran - James Daniels**
  Mr. Daniels - a Navy veteran with 23 years of experience – is a Certified Welding Educator, Certified Welding Inspector, and holds an ACCP Level 2 visual certification from the American Welding Society for Non-Destructive Testing. He has received the Navy and Marine Corp Commendation Medal for Critical Path Planning Coordination, and has also received the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for Performance as a Port Engineer. James has also worked as an instructor at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Newbern. Mr. Daniels has grown the welding program from approximately 10 full-time welding students in one class to more than 40 full-time welding students over three programs. The accreditation board requires each program to
graduate at least 60 percent of its students and place at least 70 percent of those in jobs of the field of study. Mr. Daniels exceeds these requirements every year. In the 2014 to 2015 school year he graduated 80% of his students and placed 74% in welding positions.

- **Large Business - Jeffboat**
  Jeffboat is the manufacturing Division of American Commercial Barge Line. Jeffboat got their start nearly 80 years ago, manufacturing inland barges and towboats. Jeffboat's operations spans 68 acres on the Ohio River, and they are the largest inland shipbuilder in the nation. The company is also very active in their community promoting the importance of welding and welding careers. They regularly provide welding equipment to local schools to help prepare students for integration to the workforce, and create a pipeline of students that have an opportunity to become future employees at Jeffboat.

- **Small Business - Flange Wizard**
  Founder and owner, Robert (Bob) L. Doan, started Flange Wizard out of his garage in 1981 with just one patented tool called the "Flange Wizard." Today, 35 years and four locations later, Flange Wizard has grown from just one employee and one product, to 18 employees and a full line of more than 50 welding tools and accessories. Flange Wizard takes a strong interest in the education of welders in local communities. The company has made instructional videos for local colleges to use as part of their welding curriculum, and they have donated to and supported several high school and college welding programs. Beyond that, Flange Wizard’s work helps local unions with their apprentice programs to place new employees in their facility.

- **Local Section - Indiana Section**
  This local section is very active in lifting up the welding industry - not only in Indiana, but throughout the entire Midwest. They helped develop and administer the Midwest Team Welding Competition which brings together high school welding programs from around the area to participate in a two-day event. Before the event, Indiana Section members help transport welding equipment to the competition area and set it all up. During the event they donate their time to supervise and judge the contestants. The Section is also highly involved with the SkillsUSA regional and state competitions. The section works with local welding suppliers to provide materials for the competitions. Section members also provide the written tests for these competitions, and promote the event to students in the area - all with the hopes of showing what a fun, great career welding can be.

- **Media Award - Frank Witsil**
  This year’s recipient is Frank Witsil for his article in the Detroit Free Press titled “Women Who Weld: Male-Dominate Skill Aims for Parity.” Frank is a Web editor with the Detroit Free Press, and
also writes mostly about business. Before joining the Free Press, he also worked at the Tampa Bay Times, Tampa Tribune and Akron Beacon Journal. He is a graduate of Florida State University, where he was a Florida Academic Scholar, Poynter Fund Scholar and Seminole Leadership Fellow. Frank also attended the University of South Florida for graduate school. He has been a member of several journalism organizations, including serving on the board of the Asian American Journalists Association. The article ran April of this year, and focused on a non-profit group called ‘Women Who Weld’ which aims to increase the number of women in the trade.

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 73,000 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