AWS Celebrates Its Past by Focusing on the Industry’s Bright Future

The Welding Journal is celebrating its centennial by looking to the future and showcasing the welding industry’s young professionals. From January to December, 2019, Society News will profile AWS members under the age of 40 from each AWS District.

The following section profiles Tyler Alexander, Dist. 11, and Kyle Worzala, Dist. 12. To nominate an AWS member, contact Katie Pacheco at kpacheco@aws.org.

District 11 Member Profile

As a well-rounded high school student, Tyler Alexander briefly toyed with the idea of becoming a physician, but abandoned the notion due to his dread of doctors and hospitals. Playing to his strong suit in math, and eliminating the other career options he knew would not be a right fit, he set his sights on mechanical engineering.

Alexander tried welding for the first time in his third year at the University of Waterloo in Ontario, Canada. Having the option of choosing from an array of specializations, he decided on welding and joining because of its hands-on component.

“It gave me a hands-on skill set, the ability to make changes and see direct results, and also to apply skills across a number of different industries,” he explained when asked what he liked most about welding. “From a future perspective, I felt it was something that was never going to go away. Welding and joining will always be present in so many industries.”

Alexander also took on a co-op position at CenterLine (Windsor), a family-run, Canada-based company specializing in advanced automation processes and joining technologies for resistance welding, metal forming, and cold spray applications.

After his graduation in 2006, Alexander joined the ranks at CenterLine’s Windsor integration facility, which makes manufacturing equipment, including automated and robotic joining cells for Tier 1 and 2 automotive suppliers. He has worn different hats for the company in the past 13 years, starting as a welding engineer and transitioning to welding engineer group supervisor after a few years.

Today, he is the customer services manager. According to Alexander, his primary role is “management and oversight of two groups, one of which is the weld engineering group.” The welding component of his job entails setting up weld schedules, performing R&D tests internally and externally, and running prototype parts. A unique aspect of Alexander’s job includes working with the incoming co-ops from the University of Waterloo, which he describes as one of the most rewarding parts of his job.

“In a lot of cases, the students don’t have exposure to welding or the welding industry. We try our best to make sure the student gets exposed to as much as possible and leaves here with a better understanding of the automotive industry, for manufacturing inside the automotive industry, and the welding aspect of welded products,” he affirmed. “On top of that, we try to give them the best experience we can.”

The company takes in a new co-op every four months, providing a constant influx of new ideas and fresh insights.

“Being exposed to students gives you this interesting perspective that is always changing as the society changes,” he said.

In addition to guiding university students, Alexander helps serve the welding industry at large through his volunteer activities. For example, he has served the American Welding Society (AWS) C1 Committee on Resistance Welding for more than a decade. As part of the committee, he reviews specifications and offers feedback regarding revisions and updates.

Since 2009, Alexander has also taken on various roles for the AWS Detroit Section, including chair and technical chair. Some of the tasks he performs on behalf of the Section include helping with the Sheet Metal Welding Conference, one of the section’s premier technical events, and organizing events.

Alexander did not have a great deal of interaction with industry professionals, nor was he up to date on industry current events, prior to joining the Detroit Section. Volunteering with
they has changed that.

“From a networking perspective, my involvement with the AWS Detroit Section has broadened my contacts in the industry,” he said. “It has also made me far more aware of the welding-related things that are happening over in Detroit and its direct surrounding areas, more so than I would have been in the absence of involvement.”

Alexander’s engagement with the AWS Detroit Section has also allowed him to do more for CenterLine.

“I stay involved because the company supports it, and it’s important to the company that they have some representation in the AWS, the Detroit Section, and on some of these committees,” he said. “I know the company appreciates my involvement in it, so it’s a unique offering that I bring to the table for this company.”

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**District 12 Member Profile**

**Kyle Worzala**

Not many children can brag about being a welder, but at age ten, Kyle Worzala was already brandishing a shielded metal arc welding electrode holder under his father’s guidance.

“I must have been in the fourth or fifth grade when I laid my first weld,” he recalled. “I remember burning rod after rod of E6011 and E7018 on my dad’s old buzz box stick welder.”

His interest in welding was cemented at J. I. Case High School, Racine, Wis., where he was encouraged by those around him to consider a career in welding.

“I’ve always liked welding and fabricating, and I had my mind set on going into the welding industry ever since high school. Being able to make a living doing something that I enjoyed was obviously another factor,” he said when asked why he pursued a career in welding. “My family, friends, and teachers told me to go for it, and I’m glad I did.”

Worzala wasted no time after high school, earning a welding certificate from Gateway Technical College, Racine, Wis., and landing his first welding job at the age of 18. Since then, he has worked a motley of welding jobs, increasing his knowledge of welding with different processes and materials.

“I was really drawn to welding on large steel, so I worked on large overhead cranes for a while,” he explained. “From there, I worked as a welder building massive frames for surface mining equipment.”

Worzala also took a job as a welding instructor for the Elkhorn Area School District. Today he teaches at his alma mater, Gateway Technical College, where he has been for more than three years. He teaches oxyacetylene welding and cutting; brazing; shielded metal, gas metal, gas tungsten, and flux cored arc welding; blueprint reading; and robotic gas metal arc welding.

“I’ve got a pretty full schedule, but I enjoy every minute of it,” he said. His teaching style involves empowering students to create their own projects, blueprints, and parts list. They are also responsible for fitting their own pieces and choosing the appropriate welding process for their project.

“When my students build something for themselves, I believe they hold themselves to a higher level of quality and craftsmanship,” he affirmed. “The pride and joy they have after completing a project really helps them understand what can be accomplished with time, effort, planning, and ownership.”

Worzala identifies seeing his students grow from novices into confident welders as the best part of his job.

“The most rewarding part about my job as an instructor is watching the progression of my students. Most come into the first day of class with no experience welding whatsoever, but all leave on the last day of the semester with a high level of skill and knowledge,” he said. “The amount of pride I have for my job is unmeasurable. Being able to teach someone a valuable skill and have them succeed at it is my ultimate reward.”

In addition to being an instructor, Worzala is a private company welding consultant and a weld test conductor. He is also an AWS Certified Welding Educator (CWE) and Certified Welding Inspector (CWI). He once spent a year working as a CWI for a HVAC-pipe welding company, and identifies earning this certification as a major accomplishment.

“To me, becoming a CWI was comparable to a high level of prestige in the welding industry, and that gave me a lot of motivation to get that credential,” he said.

According to Worzala, being a CWI has its perks in the classroom.

“I currently work as a CWI to an extent; while I teach, I grade welds based on industry and code standards, I create WPSs [welding procedure specifications] that my students weld to, and I also perform destructive weld testing inside the welding lab,” he said.

Looking back, Worzala admits his journey to success has not been easy.

“I had to make a lot of sacrifices and put in extra work and effort to reach my goals,” he said. “Many people have helped me become not only a welder, but a CWI, a CWE, and now a college welding instructor. I will never forget those who have guided me, and every day I strive to help other members of the welding industry achieve their goals.”