

A L E G A C Y

**Built**  
**To Last**



American Welding Society®  
FOUNDATION

2025—2026 IMPACT REPORT

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

**This year marks a moment of both reflection and renewal for our organization. We pause first to honor the life and leadership of Bill Rice, our longtime chairman, whose commitment to the AWS Foundation was unmatched in both service and generosity.**

Bill believed deeply in welding's ability to create opportunity and improve lives. That conviction manifested in his service. Through years of steady leadership, Bill helped guide the foundation's financial strength and direction. His impact was not only visionary—it was enduring.

Beyond leadership, Bill was the AWS Foundation's most significant single donor, making an extraordinary legacy gift that will continue to support scholarships, education, and workforce development for generations to come. His generosity sets a powerful example of what it means to give with intention and leave behind something that lasts.

Through periods of growth and challenge alike, Bill led with integrity, generosity, and an unwavering belief in the importance of our work. His legacy lives on in the strength of our organization and in the many lives touched through his leadership.

William A. Rice Jr. pictured on the right with his father William A. Rice Sr. in front of the family business Virginia Welding Supply in Charleston West Virginia.



**In remembrance of Bill Rice**

While we grieve this loss, we also recognize that well-built organizations are designed to endure. This year marks a new chapter, one grounded in respect for the foundation Bill helped establish and a shared responsibility to carry that legacy forward.

**Leadership transitions invite humility and resolve, and we embrace this moment with a deep sense of stewardship.**

Our continued progress is made possible thanks to you, our dedicated volunteers, donors, partners, and supporters. Your commitment ensures continuity and momentum, and reflects a shared belief in investing in the future of welding. Legacy giving, in particular, plays a vital role in sustaining the AWS Foundation's work, strengthening the framework that supports students, educators, and the skilled professionals who power our industry. I am honored to serve the organization during this time of transition.

**Together, we will continue to build upon a strong foundation, ensuring that what has been entrusted to us not only survives but thrives well into the future.**

With gratitude and confidence,

*Rick Richardson*

**Rick Richardson**

Chairman, AWS Foundation Board of Trustees

# CARRYING ON THE LEGACY:

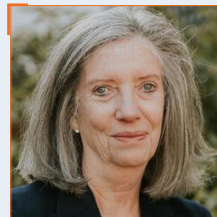
## 2025—2026 AWS FOUNDATION TRUSTEES



**Rick Richardson**  
Chairman | Consultant



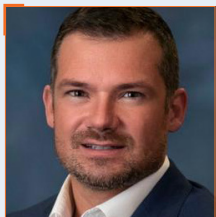
**David Abe**  
ESAB Welding &  
Cutting Products



**Mary Bihle**  
Treasurer | Consultant



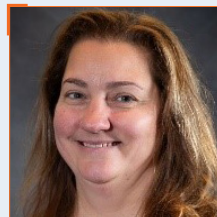
**John Bray**  
Consultant



**Dr. D. Joshua Burgess**  
AWS President  
Tennessee Valley Authority



**Jeffrey P. Deckrow**  
Consultant



**Jessica Marhefke**  
Miller Electric Mfg. Co.



**Jenny McCall**  
Wesco Gas & Welding



**Robert G. Pali**  
Past AWS Treasurer



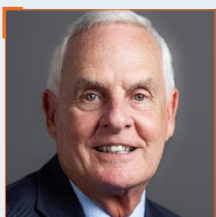
**Dr. W. Richard Polanin**  
Past AWS President



**Jason Schmidt**  
Lincoln Electric Co.



**Kerry Shatell**  
Consultant  
AWS Vice President



**Ray W. Shook**  
Past AWS  
Executive Director



**Robert W. Roth**  
RoMan  
Manufacturing, Inc.



**Elizabeth Stropki**  
Consultant



**William A. Visintainer**  
Meritus Gas Partners



**Carey Chen**  
Executive Director &  
CEO, American Welding  
Society



**Monica A. Pfarr**  
Executive Director,  
AWS Foundation

# TRUSTEES

# BUILDING BONDS

# JOS



## As Incoming AWS President, Dr. D. Joshua Burgess Aims to Strengthen the Bonds That Connect the Welding Community

Josh Burgess misses welding.

As a senior program manager at the Tennessee Valley Authority, he oversees non-nuclear welding and inspection programs for the nation's largest public utility. He's in the booth maybe four or five times a year, usually for R&D work or testing new processes. The rest of his time goes to paperwork, program management, and the countless decisions that keep power flowing to millions of homes across the Southeast.

**"I get rusty," he admits. "It's like handwriting. If you haven't written anything in a month or two and you go to sign your name, you feel a little off."**

Beginning in 2026, Josh takes on a role that may lead him even further from the torch: AWS President. He won't be striking many arcs. But he will be doing more of what welders have always done.

## "\$15 FOR \$1,200"

Burgess discovered welding as a high school elective in rural Tennessee. Inspired by a family members who worked on skidders, loaders, backhoes, and other heavy equipment, he took to it naturally. As a high school football player (running back and outside linebacker), he brought his competitive nature to welding. He competed regionally at first, then at the state level, then nationally, going all the way to the WorldSkills pre-trials.

When he won the state championship and qualified for the national competition in St. Louis, funding was a barrier. His blue-collar family hadn't planned for plane tickets and hotel rooms. Neither had the school.

Burgess' welding instructor, Joe Levisay, got in touch with the local AWS section. They agreed to sponsor him on one condition: that he become a student member.

**"At the time, an AWS student membership cost \$15," Burgess says, "so I gladly traded \$15 for a \$1,200 opportunity."**

That exchange opened doors. When he qualified for the WorldSkills pre-trials and needed \$3,000 in materials, AWS members stepped in again, donating supplies, machining components at cost, even loaning personal equipment.

The pre-trials humbled him. Competing against welders five years older with far more experience was a real challenge. Instead of backing down, that challenge sparked curiosity: What causes distortion? Why does stainless steel sag but carbon steel doesn't? What's actually happening inside the metal?

Livesay answered what he could. Then he told Burgess to visit a metallurgy professor at the University of Tennessee. For weeks, he brushed it off. He was 17, juggling football and welding competition prep. A field trip to Knoxville wasn't a priority.

# JOSH BURGESS

Then, one day, Livesay showed up to class with a substitute teacher and car keys in hand. He wasn't going to let his student miss this moment.



Josh Burgess and Joe Levisay, the high school instructor who refused to let his student miss a moment that changed everything.

## DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

"I still remember illegally parking in the faculty lot," Burgess says about his drive to Knoxville with his mentor. "Going to the wrong buildings, knocking on the professor's door without an appointment."

The professor welcomed them anyway. After 45 minutes of answering questions, the professor showed them around the lab. Josh saw microstructures under a microscope for the first time. Weld cross-sections. Hardness maps. The hidden architecture of metal.

**"That was the light bulb moment," he says. "I knew right then. This is what I want to do."**

His trajectory shifted from journeyman pipefitter to metallurgical engineer. He earned his bachelor's, master's, and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Tennessee, working as a welder to pay his way. When he graduated in 2009, the job market was uncertain. AWS certifications kept him employable, AWS scholarships eased the financial burden of graduate school—and his curiosity continued to lead him in the right direction. The same professor who'd opened his door years earlier offered him a research position under AWS Fellow Dr. Carl Lundin.

## HANDING OVER THE KEYS

Burgess has stayed active in AWS throughout his career, but it was Former AWS President Tom Mustaleski who pulled him into leadership. Mustaleski entrusted him with the Northeast Tennessee Section chairmanship. That role led to a seat on the Board of Directors in 2013, then vice president in 2022, and now the top volunteer role with AWS: the presidency.

**"The individual members and local sections made the biggest impact on my life," Burgess says.**

"I intend to use this platform to promote membership and strengthen our welding community."

He's already doing it. In Chattanooga, he handed section leadership to Alex Driscoll, a young welding instructor he'd met at an AWS event. Watching Driscoll grow into the role reminds Burgess why the work matters.

## WHAT WELDERS DO

Burgess will spend 2026 traveling to sections, schools, and communities across the country. His message is simple: Welding is here to stay, the demand for skilled professionals has never been higher, and AWS offers pathways most students don't know exist.

"There's a lot to the welding profession, not just being a welder," he says. "I hope to bring that awareness."

Burgess may not be in the booth much anymore. But every handshake, every section visit, every student who learns what's possible is a new connection. Bonds like these hold for generations.

**STRIKING THE ARC: BUILDING PATHWAYS TO WELDING CAREERS**



**WORLDWIDE**



# HELPING THE NEXT GENERATION FIND THEIR BEST FIT

**SO MUCH MORE THAN A JOB**

**FORGE YOUR OWN PATH**

Minimum Education: [Dropdown] Desired Minimum Pay: [Dropdown] Desired Location: [Dropdown]

**WELDING ENGINEER**

Minimum Education: Bachelor's Degree

Entry Level Pay: \$84,000

**WELDING FABRICATOR**

Minimum Education: High School

Entry Level Pay: \$46,000

**PIPELINER**

Minimum Education: Associate's Degree

Demand by State (Map)

## CAREERSINWELDING.COM

Relaunched in July, CareersInWelding.com helps aspiring welders explore fulfilling opportunities in the trade. A joint initiative of the American Welding Society Foundation and the James F. Lincoln Arc Welding Foundation, the site features interactive tools that match users' interests, goals, and work preferences to career options across the industry.

A companion poster series is in development to help bring the resource into even more classrooms and training centers.

**WELDING: YOUR PATH TO POSSIBILITIES**

YOUR SKILLS CAN TAKE YOU ANYWHERE

WWW.CAREERSINWELDING.COM

Logos for American Welding Society, Lincoln Arc Welding Foundation, and Lincoln Learning.

# RCF

# FROM FIRST SPARK TO FUTURE LEADER

## After Discovering Welding by Chance, Olivia Peleg Built Her Future Around It—and Is Helping Others Do the Same

When Olivia Peleg enrolled at Oakland Community College in Michigan, she had no background in the trades. When a technical course introduced her to welding, something clicked—and it wasn't just the striker.

### WHERE CRAFT MEETS SCIENCE

Peleg earned her AAS in Technical Sciences with a focus on welding technology from Oakland before transferring to Wayne State University. There, she's pursuing welding and metallurgical engineering technology, specializing in both the craftsmanship and science of welding, as well as pursuing AWS credentials through a Certified Welding Inspector track.

Faculty describe her as one of the program's top students—engaged, inquisitive, quick to contribute to technical discussions. What sets her apart is her combination of hands-on skill with engineering and metallurgy principles.

She stays active in her AWS Student Chapter, building technical knowledge and professional connections. Outside the classroom, she runs a jewelry business experimenting with non-traditional metals, and plays trombone with the Detroit Medical Orchestra.

### A CATALYST IN HER OWN RIGHT

Peleg is a back-to-back scholarship recipient through the Careers in Welding program. Even as a student, she hasn't waited to give back.



At Oakland Community College, she co-founded the Featherstone Fabricators Club to give students hands-on fabrication experience they might not otherwise get.

It mirrors what the AWS Careers in Welding Mobile Experience did for Peleg. The Careers in Welding Tour travels the country introducing people to the trade, creating entry points for those unfamiliar with welding, and giving them the opportunity to jumpstart their education with \$1,000 scholarships. Peleg wanted to do the same for her peers and help others discover what she had found.

### SUPPORT IN ACTION

Peleg represents the return on the AWS Foundation's investment in outreach. Financial support allows her to focus on mastering welding techniques and metallurgical studies, developing the skills she needs to lead in the field.

Her story shows what happens when outreach sparks opportunity. A student with no trade background discovers welding, earns back-to-back scholarships to take her interest further, and starts a club so others get the same chance.

**That's paying it forward.**

# 2025–2026 AWS FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Since 1993, the AWS Foundation has awarded more than 18,000 scholarships, totaling over \$22 million. Receiving an AWS Foundation scholarship allows welding students to focus on their education and training while turning their passion for welding into a rewarding career.

**\$2.7 MILLION AWARDED** —————> **60% INCREASE SINCE 2021**

**1,772 TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS** → **40% INCREASE SINCE 2021**

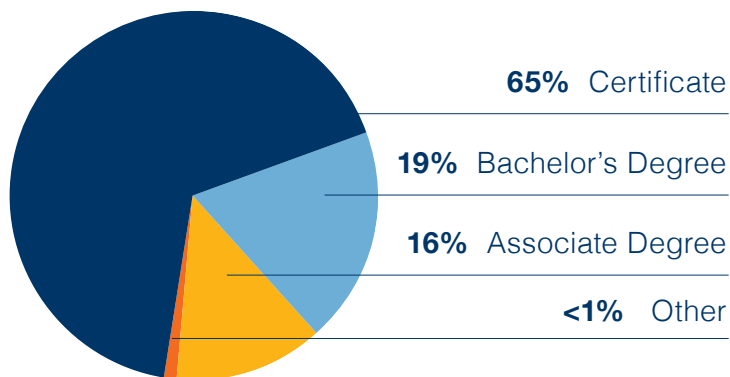


**RECIPIENTS ATTEND MORE THAN 375 DIFFERENT ACADEMIC AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS**



**25% FEMALE—OUTPACING THE WELDING INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION RATE OF 6%**

## RECIPIENTS ARE ENROLLED IN THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:



## SCHOOLS RECEIVING THE MOST SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2025 WERE:

<b>106 - \$318,125</b> Ferris State University	<b>41 - 41,250</b> Western Welding Academy
<b>61- \$74,500</b> Hobart Institute of Welding Technology	<b>26 - \$66,750</b> BYU-Idaho
<b>54 - \$144,500</b> Pennsylvania College of Technology	<b>21 - \$25,250</b> American Welding Academy
<b>48 - \$165,750</b> The Ohio State University	<b>20 - \$64,700</b> LeTourneau University
<b>47 - \$ 60,500</b> Kentucky Welding Institute	<b>20 - \$20,687</b> Advanced Welding Institute Eagle River Campus
<b>42 - \$43,625</b> Missouri Welding Institute	

The AWS Foundation would like to thank the more than 300 volunteers whose thousands of hours of work spent reviewing scholarship applications this year made our work possible. Thank you!



Scan the QR code for the list of all 2025–26 scholarship recipients.

FACES OF THE FUTURE: AWS FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS AT FABTECH



**FABTECH**

North America's Largest Manufacturing  
Welding and Fabrication Event

EVENT



**AWS**

# BTECH

Metal Forming, Fabricating,  
Finishing Event

PARTNERS



# THIS IS WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

# WHEN OPPORTUNITY COMES AROUND

# CAREERS IN WELDING TOUR

Not everyone grows up around welding. For many, the first real exposure to the trade comes by chance, if it comes at all. Fortunately, the AWS Foundation's Careers in Welding Tour is designed to bring just those sorts of encounters to the next generation of welders—wherever they are.

This nationwide mobile exhibit has been touring since 2011, showcasing the diverse and lucrative opportunities in welding through interactive and cutting-edge VRTEX virtual welding machines. Participants can engage in virtual welding contests to win scholarships and explore career pathways.

The 53-foot expandable trailer travels to state fairs, industry expos, career events, and even a few unexpected stops, such as an MLB game at Bristol Motor Speedway, New York Fleet Week, and PBR Stampede Days in Nashville. The Mobile Experience delivers on the foundation's mission: meet people where they already are and introduce them to a career they may never have considered.



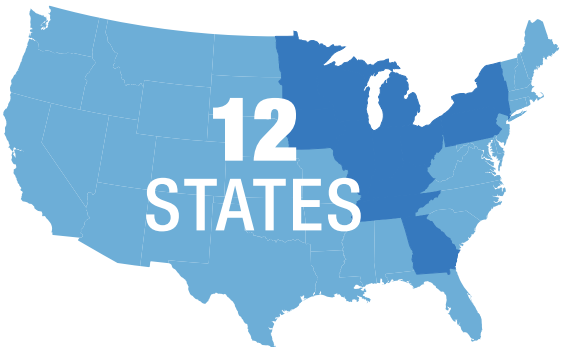
## INSIDE THE TRAILER

The mobile experience invites visitors to try their hand at welding through Lincoln Electric's VRTEX 360 virtual reality simulators. The technology offers a lifelike feel without the steep learning curve of a real weld, making it accessible for first-timers of all ages.

# PAVING THE WAY

Inspiration might be the first stop, but the wheels of the mobile experience keep turning to take visitors even further. Top scorers on the simulators earn scholarships on the spot, turning a single experience into a tangible first step. In 2025, the trailer awarded 41 scholarships of \$1,000 each to participants across its tour.

Sponsored by Lincoln Electric Company, the Careers in Welding Mobile Experience continues to serve as one of the AWS Foundation’s most visible outreach efforts, bringing the trade directly to communities and creating entry points for the next generation of welders.



## 2025 TOUR STOPS

- New York Fleet Week | New York City, NY
- Ohio State Fair | Columbus, OH
- MLB Speedway Classic at Bristol Speedway  
Bristol, TN
- Iowa State Fair | Des Moines, IA
- PBR Stampede Days | Nashville, TN
- Minnesota State Fair | St. Paul, MN
- FABTECH | Chicago, IL
- OSU Farm Science Review | London, OH
- Robinson Fans, Inc. | Zelienople, PA
- Harvest Days at State Fair Park | West Allis, WI
- Utility Expo | Louisville, KY
- Sunbelt Ag Expo | Moultrie, GA
- Bring Back the Trades Expo | Foxborough, MA
- FFA Expo | Indianapolis, IN

## WHERE THE JOURNEY LEADS

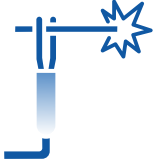
Read **Olivia Peleg’s** story on page 5 to learn how a back-to-back mobile experience scholarship recipient is building her own network of welding career exploration.



In 2025, the Careers in Welding Mobile Experience visited 15 events across 40 days—from the Iowa State Fair to FABTECH in Chicago. Here’s what that looked like.

**15**  
EVENTS

**40**  
DAYS



**28,121**  
VIRTUAL WELDS



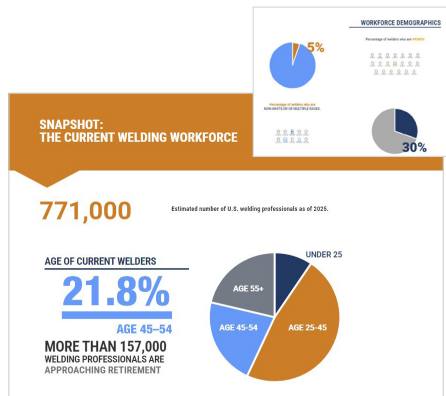
**35,959**  
ATTENDEES

**41**

**\$1,000 TOP SCORE SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED**

# STRENGTHENING AMERICA'S WELDING WORKFORCE

The AWS Foundation remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting these vital workforce development efforts.



## WELDINGWORKFORCEDATA.COM

WeldingWorkforceData.com continues to serve as the leading source for timely, accurate insights on the welding workforce, including projections, demographics, compensation, and industry trends. Drawing on the latest data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Lightcast, the AWS Foundation estimates a demand for 320,500 new welding professionals by 2030.



## WELD-ED

The National Center for Welding Education and Training (Weld-Ed), funded by the National Science Foundation, continues its efforts to strengthen welding technician education through instructor professional development, curriculum enhancements, and targeted technical assistance to programs nationwide. These initiatives support consistent, high-quality instruction, align educational pathways with evolving industry needs, and help ensure a skilled, job-ready welding workforce for the future.



## MA2JIC

In collaboration with the Manufacturing and Materials Joining Innovation Center (Ma2JIC), a National Science Foundation-supported center, the AWS Foundation is shaping the future of the engineering workforce. This innovative high school internship program at The Ohio State University provides students with the skills, mentorship, and hands-on experience needed to pursue careers in engineering, with a particular focus on the key enabling manufacturing technologies of materials joining and metal 3D-printing.

# WORKFORCE



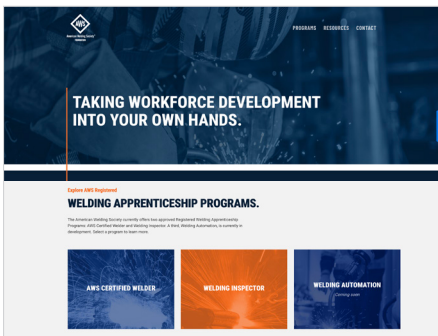
## WOMEN IN WELDING

Women are shaping the future of welding, and the AWS Foundation continues to share their unique journeys, insights, and strategies for success. Two interactive offerings were held in 2025. The “Do I Have to Wear Pink?” panel discussion was held at Skills USA Nationals in June, and a half-day workshop titled “Forging Paths: Women Leading the Way in Welding” was held at FABTECH Chicago in September



## WELDING AUTOMATION APPRENTICESHIP

The U.S. Department of Labor officially approved the National Guideline Standard for the Registered Welding Automation Specialist in May 2025. This comprehensive model aligns with the AWS Certified Robotic Arc Welder certification and provides both the classroom instruction and on-the-job learning critical in automated welding environments.



## WELDINGAPPRENTICESHIP.COM

Following a comprehensive redesign of the site, weldingapprenticeship.com provides a centralized platform to support employer access and engagement. Featuring approved National Guideline Standards for the AWS Certified Welder, Welding Inspection, and Welding Automation Specialist, the site connects visitors with resources to develop welding-focused apprenticeship programs.

FUNDING THE FUTURE: GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS



# BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

## GRANTS THAT TRANSFORM

From new welding machines to additional booths to virtual reality training systems, the AWS Foundation's Welding Workforce Grants provide schools with tools to train more professionals.

### WELDING WORKFORCE GRANT

The following schools received grants of up to \$50,000 in 2025:

Chariho Career and Tech | Wood River Junction, RI

Cleveland High School | Cleveland, TN

College of Southern Idaho | Twin Falls, ID

Don Young Alaska Job Corps Center | Palmer, AK

Hollenstein Career and Technology Center  
Fort Worth, TX

Ida Public Schools (Detroit Section Grant) | Ida, MI

Jamestown Community College | Jamestown, NY

New Horizons Regional Education Centers  
Hampton, VA

Northwest Florida State College  
(Mobile Section Grant) | Niceville, FL

Polaris Career Center (Vic Matthews  
Cleveland Section Grant) | Middleburg Heights, OH

South Piedmont Community College Foundation  
Polkton, NC

Southern Crescent Technical College | Monticello, GA

University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College  
North Little Rock, AR

Utah State University - Blanding | Blanding, UT



### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

**Michael Ritchie, Cleveland High School:**

“Receiving the Welding Workforce Grant means everything to me and my students. It allows us to expand hands-on training and provide better equipment, giving these young welders a real shot at a successful future in the trade. This support helps turn our classroom into a launchpad for lifelong careers.”

**Dr. Angela Kremers, Dean of Technical and Professional Studies, University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College:**

“This grant will help us modernize our labs and provide equipment that will directly assist students in mastering various welding methods and achieving critical American Welding Society certifications.”

**Chloe Wilson, Utah State University:**

“The Welding Workforce Grant will provide our students (primarily Native American individuals from rural communities) with cutting-edge equipment and consumables. This opportunity expands access to skilled trades education, empowering them to build lasting careers in welding and transform their futures.”

# FULL CIRCLE

# GRANTS

## Jon Hiebl's Journey from Grant Recipient to Grants Committee Member

In early 2020, Jon Hiebl was a welding instructor at Chippewa Valley High School in Wisconsin when he submitted an application for a \$25,000 AWS Foundation grant. His school received the funding that spring, but what happened next illustrates how one point of contact with AWS can blossom into more opportunity.



### THE PATH TO LEADERSHIP

Through his interactions with Dale Lange, then AWS District 12 Director, Hiebl deepened his involvement with the organization. At Lange's encouragement, Hiebl applied for the AWS Future Leaders Program—and was chosen.

From 2023 to 2025, Hiebl served on the AWS Board of Directors. During his tenure, he contributed to the Growth, Development & Engagement Committee and the Education & Training Committee, going on to judge the Wisconsin High Schools SkillsUSA Competition.

### THE CYCLE CONTINUES

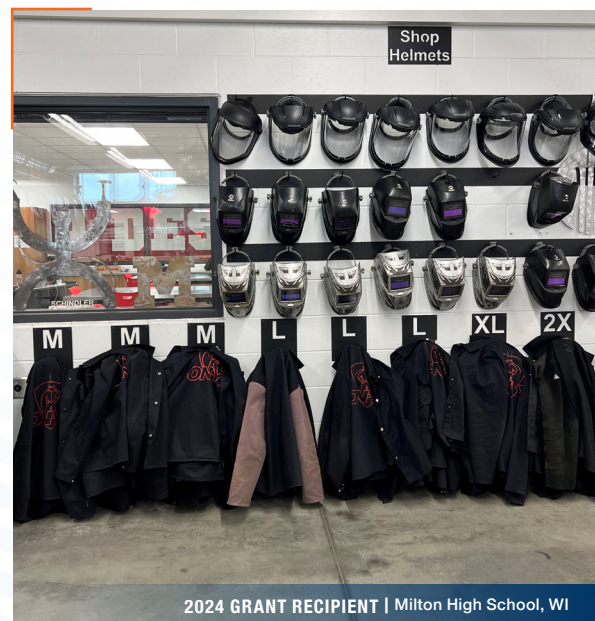
Hiebl's formal term on the board ended in December 2025, but his involvement with AWS shows no signs of stopping. In January 2026, he joined the AWS Foundation Grants Committee, the same group that supported him at Chippewa Valley High School. Now, he'll be helping welding instructors like him from around the country access the support they need to teach, exposing countless more students to the trade.



*Scan to read more about ASWF grants and ways to support.*

## HELP SUPPORT AWS FOUNDATION GRANTS

Grants provide schools with the equipment and resources they need to train the next generation of welders. Your contribution helps extend that support to more programs nationwide.



2024 GRANT RECIPIENT | Milton High School, WI

# INVESTING IN INNOVATION

“The fellowship’s impact extends beyond my own career. In 2024, one of my PhD students received this same prestigious award for developing inverse models of wobble laser additive manufacturing to produce defect-free parts. This continuity demonstrates the fellowship’s lasting influence, fostering generations of researchers dedicated to advancing the science and technology of welding and additive manufacturing.”





**Dr. Tuhin Mukherjee**  
Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering,  
Iowa State University




**AWS FELLOWSHIP**  
Fernando Romero Consuegra  
The Ohio State University

“Evaluation of Hydrogen Embrittlement Susceptibility in Pipeline Steel Welds”

*Under the guidance of Professor Boian T. Alexandrov, Ph.D.*

**AWS FELLOWSHIP**  
Eduardo Alvarez Rocha  
The University of Alberta

“Toughness properties of thick sections welded with multi-pass handheld laser beam welding (HLBW)”

*Under the guidance of Professor Patricio F. Mendez, PhD*




**AWS FELLOWSHIP**  
Flint Colvin  
The Ohio State University

“Ultrasonic Assisted Soldering of Metallized-Polymer Current Collectors for Thermal Runaway Resistant Li-Ion Batteries”

*Under the guidance of Dr. Avi Benatar*




**AWS FELLOWSHIP**  
Matthew Tu  
University of California San Diego

“Optimization of Charpy V Notch (CVN) Notch Location for Heat-Affected Zone (HAZ) Testing of Single and Multiple Pass Steel Welds”

*Under the guidance of Professor Machel L. Morrison, Ph.D.*




**MILLER ELECTRIC MANUFACTURING CO. FELLOWSHIP**  
Satyaki Sinha  
Iowa State University

“Reducing Cracking and Porosity in Wobble Laser Powder Bed Fusion Using Modeling, Experiments, and Optimization Methods”

*Under the guidance of Dr. Tuhin Mukherjee*




**GLENN J. GIBSON FELLOWSHIP**  
Aric Adamson  
Colorado School of Mines

“Multi-Principal Element Alloy Filler Development for Brazing at Approximately 1000 Degrees Celsius”

*Under the guidance of Dr. Zhenzhen Yu*

# EMPOWERING EDUCATORS

## BUILDING SKILLED INSTRUCTORS NATIONWIDE

A successful career in welding can often be traced back to a single instructor. By investing in educators, the return multiplies across every student they impact. The AWS Foundation's commitment to teacher development strengthens that chain, equipping welding educators with the knowledge, skills, and opportunity they can pass on to the students who follow.

### THE 2025 CWE SEMINAR

In partnership with the Bechtel Group Foundation, the AWS Foundation hosted the 2025 Certified Welding Educator (CWE) Seminar and Exam at Lincoln Electric's World Headquarters in Euclid, Ohio, from July 27 through August 2. Nearly two dozen welding instructors from across the country attended, representing a mix of high school and postsecondary programs.

Over an intensive week of training, participants deepened their technical knowledge and teaching skills before sitting for the CWE. The seminar achieved a 67% pass rate.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the seminar's value in strengthening welding education and instructor preparedness.



### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"First, I would like to say it was an honor to be selected to attend the seminar hosted by the AWS/Bechtel Foundations. I never thought a small-town instructor from Tennessee would ever be selected for such a big opportunity.

The growth and knowledge that I gained during the seminar was beyond valuable. So much information was passed along to me that I can pass along to my students.

My teachers, Dr. Rich Campbell and Dr. Polanin, were better than I could have asked for—not to mention the network of people that you encounter. It simply has become one of the best decisions of my career to apply for and attend this seminar. Thank you, AWS/Bechtel Foundations, for the opportunity and look forward to a future working relationship with both!"



**Josh Higgins, CWE**  
Welding Instructor

### SPECIAL THANKS

To the Bechtel Group Foundation, who, with support from Lincoln Electric, makes the CWE Seminar possible.



# CELEBRATING INSTRUCTION

## Welding Educator Video Initiative

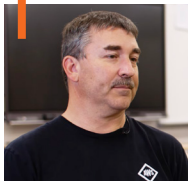
The AWS Foundation's YouTube video series gives students an authentic window into welding careers, presented by professionals working in the field. Through accessible "day in the life" stories, the videos speak to young people exploring welding as a career option, highlighting personal career journeys across diverse industries and illustrating the breadth of opportunities available in the profession.

The library expanded in 2025 to include a video featuring Matt Hayden, Welding Instructor at Cedartown High School in Georgia. The video showcases how Hayden's passion for the trade—and for his students—keeps the torch of welding education burning bright, underscoring the critical role instructors play in mentoring the future of welding.

**"I think, to be a good instructor, you need the personality where you want to be helpful to people. ... Be that instructor that they can look up to. Be that instructor that, years later, they respect. They've got to be motivated to do it because they want to give back to the craft and to the next generation."**

### Matt Hayden

Welding Instructor, Cedartown High School



Watch Matt's story and others on the AWS Foundation YouTube channel.



## WELDING EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIPS

Over the past year, the AWS Foundation invested more than \$62,000 to help welding educators pursue the education and training needed to enhance their teaching—and better prepare the next generation of skilled welders.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS SUPPORTED

- Bachelor's Degree in Career and Technical Studies
- Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Management and Applied Engineering
- Master of Education (M.Ed.)
- Certified Welding Educator Seminar and Exam
- Certified Welding Inspector Seminar and Exam
- Non-Destructive Examination Coordination Endorsement
- Welder Coordination and Quality Assurance Endorsement

**37** SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

**\$62K** SCHOLARSHIP VALUE TOTAL

# WELDING THE FUTURE



PICTURED AT THE WELDING FUTURE PANEL | Richard Polanin, Joe Young (moderator), D. Joshua Burgess, Garra Liming, and Anthony Nighswander

## AWS FOUNDATION AT FABTECH CHICAGO

Last September, representatives from AWS hosted a panel discussion titled “Welding the Future—Connecting Education, Certification, and Industry.” The session drew a large audience and featured leaders from across the welding community.

The AWS Foundation Associate Director Joe Young moderated the hour-long event. He shared the stage with Richard Polanin, AWS president, long-time educator and coprincipal investigator for Weld-Ed; D. Joshua Burgess, incoming AWS President with Tennessee Valley Authority; Garra Liming with ASNT; and Anthony Nighswander with APT Manufacturing.

Among the topics covered was the importance of partnerships to help students succeed. As artificial intelligence drives changes to welding curricula, the panel emphasized pragmatic caution with the new technology, emphasizing the importance of hands-on skills: “I’m a firm believer in apprenticeship programs,” Nighswander said.

**“Teach students correctly so they’re employable when they get out,” Polanin emphasized.**

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE PANEL:

### POLANIN

Schools need to motivate students by teaching curriculum that will excite them.

### BURGESS

Celebrating and promoting mentorship remains important.

### LIMING

Making welding jobs desirable as a four-year degree requires a cultural shift and continued outreach.

### NIGHSWANDER

Today’s education system still listens to and wants to work with industry.

# SETTING THE STANDARD

## AWS Introduces New WorldSkills Competition Guidelines

Welding competitions can help identify top talent and open doors to career success—but only when the playing field is level.



In 2025, AWS published the *Guideline for Welding Competitions and Weld Assessment* (AWS SCC1.0-2025), a free resource developed to bring consistency, fairness, and transparency to how competitions are conducted and scored.

Created in collaboration with the AWS WorldSkills Competition Committee, the guideline covers best practices for competition setup, weldment specifications, participant eligibility, judging criteria, and scoring methodologies. It draws on contributions from past WorldSkills U.S. competitors who understand what's at stake: a clear path from competition success to career opportunity.

The guideline is available at no cost to educators, competition organizers, and state programs, giving every competitor a clearer path to the world stage.



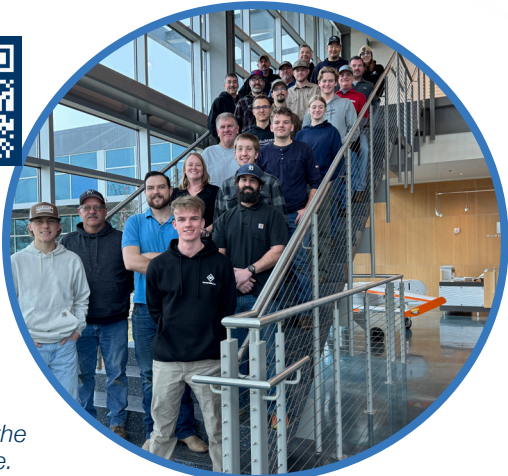
## FROM COMPETITOR TO COMMITTEE MEMBER

### Nicholas Peterson Is Shaping How Welders Compete

In 1993, Nick Peterson earned a bronze medal in welding at the WorldSkills Competition in Taipei. The win came with a scholarship from Miller Electric and the AWS Foundation that helped fund his welding engineering degree at Ferris State University and launch three-decade career that's inspired others to follow.

Peterson developed a scoring system for Arizona's SkillsUSA competition that became the model for nationals. He's served on the SkillsUSA Welding national technical committee since 1998 and was instrumental in shaping the new AWS competition guideline. Today, he serves as an AWS Director at Large and works as a Welding Engineer and Curriculum Developer for Miller Electric.

Peterson's thirty years of leadership shows a pattern: first, a statewide scoring system that went on to become the national standard. Now, the AWS guidelines he helped develop will influence competitions around the world.

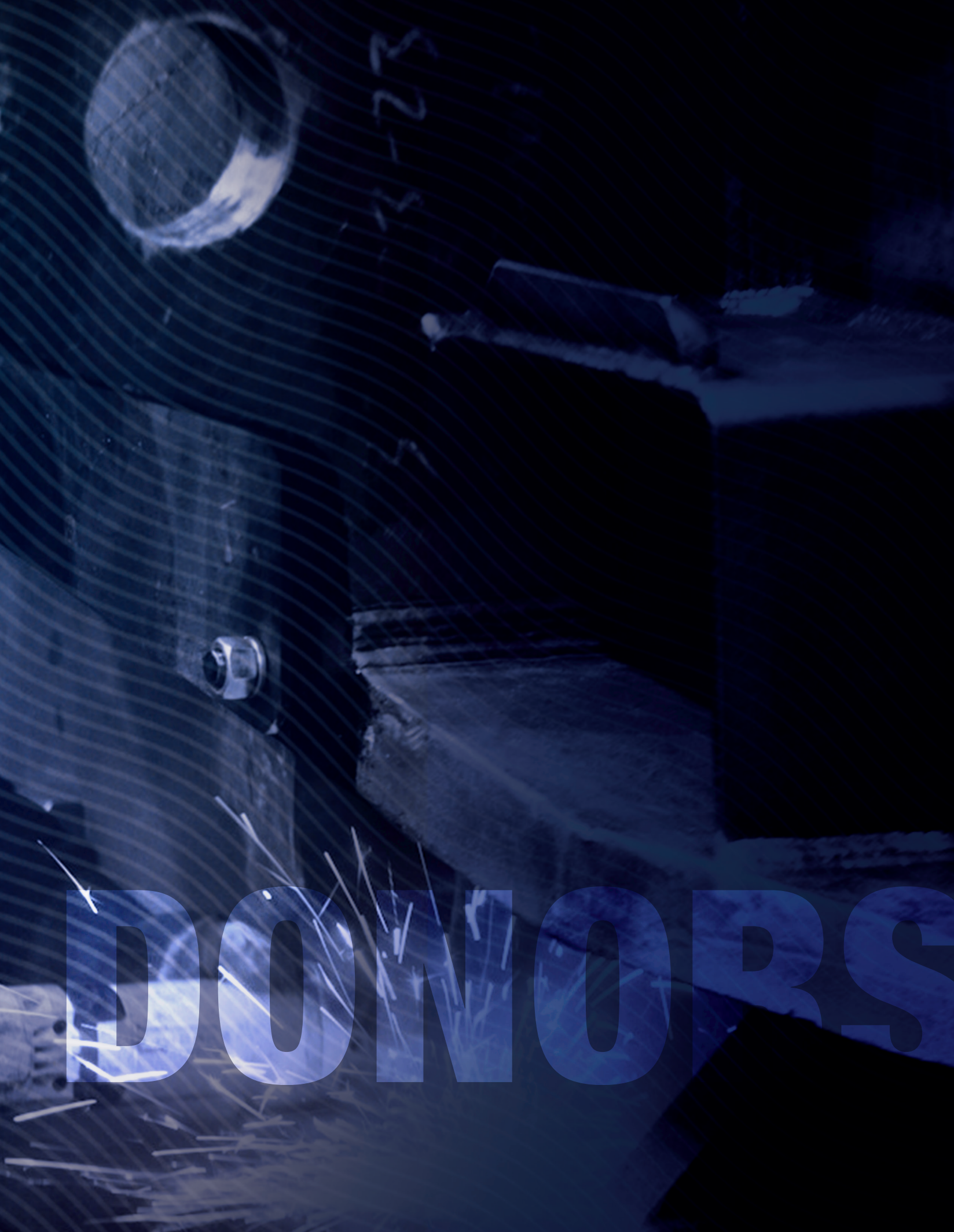


Scan to access the guideline.

**GIVING FORWARD: THE POWER OF OUR SUPPORTERS**



**AWS**



3-23

DONORS

# AWS FOUNDATION CONTRIBUTORS

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## \$100,000+

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## \$25,000+

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## SPECIAL THANKS

### PLATINUM LEVEL SUPPORTERS

The AWS Foundation would like to give special thanks to its Platinum Level Supporters, who have donated more than \$1 million to support scholarships and other workforce development initiatives.

- Bechtel Group Foundation
- Lincoln Electric Company and the Lincoln Electric Foundation
- Miller Electric Manufacturing Company

### STAFF OF THE AMERICAN WELDING SOCIETY

who contributed more than \$28,500 during the annual staff campaign.

# BUILDING A LEGACY, ONE GIFT AT A TIME

## How Dan Alford Turned Employee Development Into a Unique Model for Giving

Dan Alford knows a thing or two about building things. As president and founder of ARC Specialties, he's built robotic welding systems, a thriving Houston-based company, and a driven team of welders, metallurgists, process developers, fitters, and welding engineers.

Now he's building something else: a philanthropic legacy that's as personal as it is enduring.

### REWARDING INITIATIVE

When members of his team wanted to grow their skills and pursue new AWS certifications, Alford didn't just give them a pat on the back. He created a way to help fund their education.

Alford established scholarships through the AWS Foundation named after employees who sought to develop their expertise: the Dave Hebble, Joe Alvarez, Ron Whitman, and Dick Holdren scholarships. Each one supports others pursuing the same kind of professional growth.

It's a model that reflects how Alford thinks about giving: personal, connected to real people, and built to last.

### FORCE MULTIPLIER

In addition to establishing scholarships, Alford promotes giving more broadly across the industry by encouraging others to build similar programs and matching their contributions. Together with AWSF's existing matching program, Alford helps amplify support for the workforce threefold.

### BUILD YOUR LEGACY TODAY

Contact AWSF to establish a scholarship or matching program, and learn how your contribution can pay dividends for future welders for generations to come.



### SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

ARC Specialties extends its commitment beyond scholarships. The company recently donated a \$150,000 robotic welding system to Texas State Technical College, equipping students with modern automation tools. They host training seminars, deliver classes on processes like submerged arc welding, and open their facility to local high school robotics teams for hands-on mentorship.

It's a model that enhances workforce development, the strength of the industry, and the long-term health of American manufacturing.

**For Alford, it's all connected.  
And it's all worth investing in.**



American Welding Society®  
FOUNDATION

**Founded in 1989, the AWS Foundation is the philanthropic arm of the American Welding Society, the nonprofit organization with a global mission to advance the science, technology, and application of welding and allied joining and cutting processes.**

The AWS Foundation works to ensure the growth and development of the welding industry through various initiatives, including career awareness, scholarship programs, and grants to institutions that offer welding education and training.

As a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization, we rely on the generosity of our partners who understand the value of welding and its role in building a better, stronger economy.

[AWS.ORG/FOUNDATION](https://aws.org/foundation)

