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AWS Joins Forces with Local Business Leaders and Educators to Combat Welder Shortage

AWS Local District 10 in Ohio and Pennsylvania Propose First-Ever Welding Advisory Council Aimed at Enhancing Welding Education and Student Recruitment

Parma, OH, March 8, 2007 – In response to the shortage of skilled welders that continues to strain businesses across the nation, the American Welding Society (AWS) Local District 10, which covers parts of Ohio and Pennsylvania, is joining forces with area businesses, unions, and high school educators to propose a first-ever Welding Advisory Council (Council). The Council would be a direct responder to local welding-related issues. Primary functions of the Council would include enhancing and generating new welding programs across the area and connecting local businesses and unions with educators and administrators to combat welder shortages, increase recruitment levels and reinforce welding standards and certification. The Council would also help to implement and provide support to advisory committees within high school and vocational welding programs, which typically include an AWS Section member, welding instructor, administrator, and representatives from local manufacturing businesses and trade unions.

A meeting to discuss the AWS District 10 Advisory Council will take place at 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. on March 14, 2007, at the Sheet Metal Workers Local Union 33, 12525 Corporate Drive, Parma, Ohio. During the meeting, several members of the business and education community in AWS District 10 will voice their concerns over the current welder workforce environment and the consequences of limited labor. AWS District 10 covers Cleveland, Youngstown, and Canton, OH, as well as Erie and Franklin, PA.

“There is a major gap in communication between our local high school level welding schools and businesses,” said AWS District 10 Director, Richard Harris. “Our welding schools thrive from donations received from area businesses, which may supply anything from metals and other materials to welding machinery and attire. These types of donations increase the vitality of our welding educational programs, resulting in a cleaner and more organized classroom setting and higher quality graduates. However, due to this gap, it is not uncommon for

a welding teacher to be forced to shut down a program or teach limited skills due to lack of funding and materials. When that happens, fewer quality welders are available for hire and businesses become strapped. Our proposed Welding Advisory Council could strengthen the partnership between businesses and schools so that these welding programs can thrive.”

Recruitment of younger people into the welding industry is reported to be one of the main problems currently facing instructors. AWS estimates that nearly half of the skilled welder workforce is approaching retirement, leaving North America to cope with a shortage of more than 200,000 skilled welders by 2010. In fact, according to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number of welders employed in the U.S. has already declined about 10%, from 594,000 in 2000 to 576,000 in 2005.

“One of the welding industry's biggest challenges today is attracting young talent, which is attributable in large part to its tarnished image,” said Dennis Klingman, AWS Education Committee Chairman. “Many people still associate welding with black and white photos of tired welders covered in scuff marks and dressed in soiled clothing. But the welding industry has undergone dramatic changes with the advancement of technology, and is no longer confined to the dark and dirty setting reminiscent of last century's industrial era. Despite this, the image problem continues to exist and parents, instructors and counselors have been hesitant to introduce students to the industry. The fact is welding can lead to a multitude of lucrative and exciting career paths, including inspection, engineering or sales. It is our hope that by forming this Council, we may be able to shift current mindsets by opening the communication between businesses, parents and instructors.”

Key topics and speakers include:

Topic: Advisory Committee Contributions to Successful Welding Education

- **Glenn Smith**, Education Consultant, Secondary and Post Secondary, Ohio Department of Education
- **James Gronski**, Manager, Division of Adult and Post Secondary Career and Technical Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education

Topic: What High School “Customers” Want – An Overview of Education and Experience Requirements; Current Wages and Career Opportunities

- **John Nesta**, Training Coordinator, Sheet Metal Workers Local 33
- **Dave Hughes**, Specialty Fab Inc.
- **Terry Urbanek**, Special Representative, United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the U.S. and Canada
- **Marty Siddall**, Technical Representative, Lincoln Electric Company

Topic: Importance of Welding Education Standards

- **Dennis Klingman**, Chairman, AWS Education Committee, Manager of Technical Training, Lincoln Electric Company

Topic: Welding Workforce Development Programs and Scholarships

- **Sam Gentry**, Executive Director, AWS Foundation

Topic: Case Studies –f Successful Welding Programs

- **Huck Hughes**, Welding and Metal Fabrication Instructor, Columbiana County Career & Technical Center

Topic: Advisory Committees - Resolving Issues and Influencing Curriculum

- **Art Baughman**, Welding Instructor, Canton Local Schools
- **Larry Klemens**, Principal, Mercer County Career Center

*****The day will conclude with an escorted tour of welding classrooms and laboratories.***

For more information and/or to attend this meeting, please RSVP by email to Richard Harris, Director, AWS District 10, at richaharris@alltel.net. For press inquiries, please contact Adrienne Zalkind, AWS Public Relations, at 305-443-9353, ext. 416, or via email at azalkind@aws.org.

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 more than 200 local Sections. For more information, visit the Society's website at www.aws.org.

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