

Nomination for Rich Currie, Welding Instructor- Allegan County Area Technical and Education Center

Rich Currie has been the welding instructor for the Allegan Tech Center for the almost 30 years. But he has been so much more than that to his students and the employers in the high demand world of welding and manufacturing, in our community. Rich started the welding program when the Tech Center first opened. He tirelessly recruited high school students and adults to try to fill his new program. At the same time he began to build a base of welding and fabrication shop owners and managers who would agree to take on his best students as employees. As his reputation as a great teacher and mentor grew, the tables have turned. There is now a long waiting list to get into Rich's class each year. And that is because everyone knows his class is where you learn the most up to date technical and employability skills, which turn into great jobs and open up many career options. And employers are calling on Rich every day-even competing with each other-for a chance to have Rich's students work for them. That is because Rich delivers on his promise of providing hardworking, highly skilled individuals who will become valuable assets to these companies. Through the years Rich has mentored hundreds of students, many who had never seen real success in school until they entered his classroom. Rich's expectations are high for every student who walks through that door, and he makes it his mission to make welders out of each and every one. And the students rise to that challenge because of his patience, skill, and natural talent to teach. Rich runs his classroom like the workplace and models respect and hard work. One of Rich's students said of him, "Mr. Currie takes the time to work with every single student one on one to be sure they understand the skills we need to be successful. He has helped me to exceed the expectations of my employer. I now know that I can go anywhere and apply for a job and be confident in my skills." Rich has also carved out time to offer welding classes to adults every fall and winter where he has transformed lives by giving students a marketable technical skill as well as the important soft skills it takes to get and keep a job. Allegan County is truly a better place for employers, employees and students because of the dedication and heart of Rich Currie.

