

From The President's Desk

Hello WTEA members. I am writing this while catching up on things over Spring Break. It seems as though everything has been a whirlwind since the conference and all the prep that went into it. Before we know it, this school year will be over. The end of the year is always a rat race with Supermileage and Electrathon events, SkillsUSA, Spring Break, Prom, Spring Sports, final exams, and graduation. It is a stressful time of year, but also an exciting time. I hope the conference energized you and gave you the passion and drive to push through the rest of the year. I know it did for me.

The spring issue of the Interface includes a lot of write-ups on the conference, along with pictures of the different events. Be sure to read about our award winners and check out the photos from the Awards Banquet. Check out what your district directors and other WTEA Board members are saying about the conference. Other articles include information related to leadership in administration in the areas of STEM education, the benefits of independent studies for your students, the undervaluation of TE, articles from university students, several opportunities, and many more interesting insights into our field.

With all the interest in the Project Showcase at the conference over the past few years, I would like to start a new section in the Interface that showcases a project that others can use in their classroom. For the next Interface issue, I will be looking to the membership for project plans that you would be willing to share with others.



In closing, thank you so much to all of the people that helped put on a bang-up conference. The enthusiasm was contagious. It was great seeing lots of old friends and creating many new ones. I ask that all of you keep the excitement going and stay in touch throughout the rest of the school year and into the summer. Let us know if the WTEA can help you in any way.

Take care.

Steve Meyer, *WTEA President*

Teaching and Leading

By Mike Cattelino, Fox Valley Technical College



The 2017 WTEA Conference seems like only yesterday, but yet an already somewhat distant memory. Steve Meyer, WTEA president, recently sent a message to the WTEA Board of Directors asking for a memory or two from this year's conference. The first one that came to my mind was that I had the honor of introducing and then listening to the opening session keynote speaker, Pete Uvaas, President at Fox Valley Tool & Die in Kaukauna Wisconsin. FVT&D was my previous employer, a company that I remain in close contact with to this day.

In case you missed the conference opening session, Pete did a nice job of reflecting on his career path that started more than 40 years ago as a Youth Apprentice. He also wove in his experiences on the family farm along with the experience of raising his own family. Like Pete, I have a farm background that I reflect on frequently. When I internalized his comments somewhat, I couldn't help but think about my nearly 12 years with FVT&D, my growth there, and the company's growth over the years before, during, and after my employment with them.

I also recalled, quite vividly, the conversation I had with Pete moments after I told the college I would accept their offer to be a Machine Tool Technician instructor back in 1999. Yes, it was moments later as I was on my way to Pete's office to talk to him about the position when I was paged to answer a phone call. The call was from the college's HR department. I then called my wife, followed by what seemed like a long walk to Pete's office to share the news. Ask me about that conversation sometime!

I don't dwell on the fact that I left FVT&D but there are days that I do miss roughing aluminum in a CNC milling machine and improving the 2-minute cycle time on the second of a two-piece run on a CNC machine by 20 seconds. What I do think about is how many people I have had the opportunity to connect with while teaching and what influence I might have had on their abilities to machine parts. I have heard from many of those past students, and the feedback was mostly positive. Some have left the trade for various reasons but most are still "making chips." I did not get to teach our son but I do get to hear about his days at work in a machine shop all the time. Moments I will cherish forever.

As I continue to reflect on Pete's opening session address, it reinforces that teaching is a life-time opportunity that we continue to develop over the years. I had seen Pete make a very similar presentation to middle and high school students on several occasions over the years. He was engaging with the students every time. The addition of the remote control for the conference address took it to another level. As I observed people completing their remote control assemblies near the end, I realized that he had just taught a lesson on measuring in about 30 minutes to a group of 200 people. Seems simple, right? We all know better, but it does show that someone without a teaching credential can be a good teacher. Granted, he had a long time to prepare for a 30 minute lesson. He also had a lot of support from the people at FVT&D to pull together all the resources that went into the presentation. To me that was clear evidence of leadership toward a shared goal. FVT&D needs talent, just like most skilled trades employers now days. The people at the company today see the need as well, and are poised to train the workforce that will sustain the company into the future.

The WTEA Board has ramped up efforts in recent years to promote the career path of teaching technical education. I hope that effort continues because as you have heard from many recent conference speakers, without tech-ed teachers, the manufacturing/engineering/STEM workforce of the future is going to suffer. Stay the course of promoting the career that you are passionate about.