

2016 WMIA Wooden Globe Awards

Nominee for Educator of the Year: Mark Smith, Morris High School and Joliet Junior College, Morris, Illinois

Nominator: Nancy Fister, AWFS

I would like to nominate Mark Smith, a long-standing, passionate educator who has tirelessly sought partnerships with industry for the benefit of his students and the industry.

Mark has been teaching high school and post-secondary wood technology programs for **15** years. What is special about Mark and his teaching is he has always understood the value of preparing students for real-world work. He teaches courses in CAD, manufacturing, production and CAD/CAM, at the same time he is very cognizant of instilling in students an understanding of business fundamentals, teamwork and leadership.

In **2007**, Mark stepped away from his high school teaching post to assume the directorship of WoodLINKS USA, an industry-education partnership program that intensified the relationship between schools and industry companies. Mark was instrumental in developing a network of top-notch wood technology teachers from around the country, in procuring thousands of dollars of donations from industry for them, and in introducing them to industry and connecting them to our trade shows. This exemplary group of dedicated teachers have become ardent followers of IWF and the AWFS Fair, taking in all the knowledge they can and bringing it back to their classrooms to train students in the skills most needed by the wood products manufacturing sector.

After **4** years with WoodLINKS –when the recession negatively impacted financial support for WoodLINKS -- Mark went to work for Riverside Door Company managing the CNC and Shaper departments, giving him the opportunity to experience the industry's latest technologies. Now Mark is back in the classroom developing computer-integrated advanced manufacturing programs using CAD/CAM and CNC equipment. The program he inherited at Morris High was in decline and the administration was contemplating closing it. With Mark's guidance, they began installing up-to-date advanced manufacturing equipment –including finishing -- and reorganizing the shop layout. A new curriculum was constructed around advanced manufacturing focused on the wood industry, with many resources available to students online (Mark also shares numerous videos of his students in action on YouTube.) Mark is now certifying students with passports from the Woodwork Career Alliance (WCA) and encouraging achievement of the WCA's Sawblade certificate. He is building new local and national supporters of his program, working with companies to host field trips, act as guest speakers, donate materials, lend technical support – and hire students. Mark's students have tackled everything from guitars to wooden sunglasses (which achieved a celebrity following!) as well as various prototypes, furniture pieces and more.

Mark's passion is education and learning. He is steadfast in his efforts to give his students the best educational opportunities that his school, industry partners and he can offer. While quiet about himself, Mark will happily share the stories and successes of the multitudes of students he has taught. I think Mark is so deserving of this award and I recommend him heartily.