



April 4, 2001

Mark Smith  
Shilo High School, Industrial Technology Dept.  
21751 N. 575<sup>th</sup> St.  
Hume, IL 61932

Dear Mark:

I want you to know how impressed I am with your wood technology program as well as your dedication and marketing efforts. In the past few years this association has actively researched the state of such programs throughout the country and found them to be dismally lacking. Only in a few areas of the country where state and local governments, as well as industry, have partnered with local educators have we found clusters of thriving, productive programs.

The fact that after making contact with us last year at IWF, you took the time to follow-up and send me information and photos about your students and programs...then found additional time to respond in-depth to the questions your initial email elicited, makes you quite unique. With the exception of a few of the high school teachers I have met who have either started WoodLINKS USA certification courses or are in the process of doing so, you are the only high school teacher who seems to understand that marketing your program and your student's abilities is essential to overall program success and has taken the extra time and effort required.

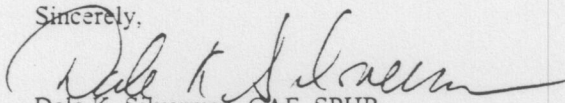
We have found that only where teachers of unusual dedication exist do programs such as yours exist. We also know that to create such a program from "scratch"...garnering the tools and equipment, developing enthusiasm and a reputation within the school that draws students into the program...is extremely costly and difficult. Many school systems undervalue such programs until a teacher retires or moves on and they find that the skill sets needed and the dedication required simply don't exist among entry-level teachers. In some cases, by the time a qualified teacher is found, the equipment has been broken or worse, has disappeared, and besides a lack of budgetary funds available to replace needed equipment, the links to industry have been lost as well as the influx of interested students.

We hope that WoodLINKS USA certification and support can eventually help strengthen and increase the number of high quality programs throughout the country. As you know, currently only a few model programs exist and need to prove themselves out before serious expansion can occur. Until such time, programs such as the one you have built are vital to our industry and to the many students who have the potential to build successful careers within the wood industry as a result of the foundation of skills they internalize as they move through your courses.

I will be sending under separate cover, three copies of our spring newsletter that contains some of the information you sent us. Please keep in touch. I hope to see several of your students among our finalists at our 2001 student design contest. Assuming they make the list, I also hope that you will be able to accompany them to the final judging and awards ceremony to be held during the AWFS<sup>®</sup> Woodworking Machinery & Furniture Supply Fair<sup>3</sup> in August.

Keep up the good job!

Sincerely,



Dale K. Silverman, CAE, SPHR  
Executive Director

Cc: Larry Hilchie, Wilf Torunski, WoodLINKS USA

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