

## **ESAB Weld It Forward**

Attending the Carroll County Career and Technology Center's (CCCTC) welding program has been one of the best decisions that we have made as students and contributing members of society. As teenagers, we focused on "our world" and didn't realize the positive impact we could have in our community. Prior to the program, we were reluctant to push outside of our comfort zones. Madie is a non-traditional female student and Fletcher had no welding background. The curriculum combines hands-on projects that are geared towards teaching technical welding skills, collaborating with other programs and businesses while focusing on community involvement or "paying it forward".

Prime examples of projects include:

- A 9/11 memorial for the Carroll County Public Safety Training Center honoring our American heroes
- 4-H trophies presented to 21 winners at the Carroll County Fair
- 100 oak leaves cut on our plasma cam for a Blacksmith Guild appreciation project
- A hand railing for a church
- Metal crab and blue heron cut-outs for South Carroll High School courtyard
- 6 benches for Manchester Elementary School

These projects not only served to hone our technical skills but also afforded us the privilege to meet and touch people from all walks of life such as the family members of victims of the 9/11 tragedy, and excited 4-Hers who were handed trophies we created as a reward for their hard work.

We have been afforded opportunities to work with the community in many different ways, including assisting our instructor with 8<sup>th</sup> grade tours and open houses geared at building interests of possible enrollees. These activities help promote the school and provide younger students and their parents a glimpse of the incredible advantages at CCCTC.

We assist our instructor with an evening welding class that he teaches through Carroll Community College. We help college students work their way through the class by offering welding tips, setting up and taking down oxyacetylene torches, fixing welders, demonstrating the Plasma Cam, and helping them create projects. Working with the college students not only helps them but also serves to boost our confidence and mastery of the skills for our upcoming AWS certifications. It is rewarding to see their looks of satisfaction as we "pay it forward".

In summary, CCCTC has allowed us to become active and contributing members of the community while learning a trade. We get real-world experience that helps us master skills, learn to use different welding equipment, interact with professionals, and develop leadership qualities. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication of time during and after school, but this journey has helped us become better people and has been truly eye opening. Having others depend on us makes us strive to be the best, and we have seen how we have touched the lives of others. This keeps us engaged and motivates us to push forward! Because of all of the rewarding experiences through our welding class, we will continue to "Weld It Forward" both personally and professionally.