

Picture this...a 35 year old veteran who had a career, a wife, and kids. Never in his life did he imagine he would be out of work, and unable to find a job that matched his skill set. I am this person, and I was reluctant to go back to school with a bunch of "kids" who I could never possibly find any common ground with. My attitude has changed tenfold. Let me tell you why.

After the first couple of weeks of the course, I noticed something I didn't think I'd see. I saw people, not kids, helping each other. They started going to each other for tips and advice to complete the next weld or help on tackling a new welding position. I saw people of all walks of life and gender lifting each other up, all while maintaining a healthy competitiveness in our daily practice. We all want to be able to weld better than the next person. But yet we all still reach out for help if we are struggling, and we will gladly help one another. I believe this speaks volumes of the character of these people, my peers, not "a bunch of kids".

I truly believe that this course is shaping not only them, but also me, to go out into the world and be kind and compassionate people in society, and ready to enter the workforce with a great work ethic. I would like to think that any employer would find these traits and strengths a strong hiring point. The world needs more people to do the type of work we are studying. I truly believe that Shawnee Community College is the perfect place to be able to get students into the workforce and make a difference. Whether it's in automotive, steel construction, fabrication, bridge building, sheet metal... it doesn't matter what job one takes, what matters is the professionalism and the overall character that this course offers without even being told to do so.

We have camaraderie in this class like I had during my time in the military. It is the first time that I have seen it since I was enlisted. It's encouraging to come into a class where you can talk to everyone and feel encouraged by one another. I feel as if we are brothers and sisters in this common goal of achieving something great: the betterment of ourselves, and also being able to share our talents with the world in the field of welding.

I strongly believe Shawnee Community College exemplifies the qualities the Weld it Forward contest is looking for in a winning candidate. The school and welding program are both fantastic, and our welding instructor is what makes this program great. However, our program could use newer equipment. Some of the welders are out of date and need replacing. Being awarded the new equipment would allow students to perform their skill to their greatest potential and serve as an enhancement to an already exceptional program.