High School Teacher Named 'Regional Teacher of the Year'

A BIG Congratulations goes to Granite Falls High School Manufacturing Teacher, Michael Werner, for being named the "Regional Teacher of the Year" by the Northwest Educational Service District #189. The NWESD offers support and technical assistance to 30 school districts in Island, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish and Whatcom counties.

Teachers of the Year are recognized across the state from each region’s Educational Service District. Werner was selected unanimously by a NWESD committee and is now in the running to receive the prestigious Washington State Teacher of the Year Award selected by an Office of Superintendent Public Instruction (OSPI) committee.

More about Michael:

Michael Werner was born, raised and educated in Switzerland. He speaks fluently in English, German and French. He completed a four year Metal Machining Apprenticeship in the Swiss Air Force Technical School, graduating 1979 with the top score in his country as a Machinist. As a result, he was selected to machine Audi’s first V-8 engine and then endurance race engines serving on both BMW and Audi European race teams for a small shop in the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Michael’s passion for aerospace and vintage aircraft restoration brought him to the United States to complete his Commercial Aircraft Mechanic Certification in 1985. He was invited to stay on and restore vintage aircraft at the Oshkosh Wisconsin Air Museum. He then also had overseen a bi-lingual international project taking prototype aircraft development from Switzerland to series manufacturing in Malaysia.
Werner is a certified aircraft mechanic in Switzerland and the United States (A&P), and holds a commercial pilot license for single engine aircraft. In 1989 he established an American division for a Swiss Aircraft Interiors company.

Missing hands-on work, Michael ventured into artistic woodturning. His work was showcased in the Smithsonian Museum “Fine American Craft” exhibit in Washington DC in 2005. He continues to teach woodturning locally and is frequently invited to present and demonstrate woodturning skills at fine art schools and symposiums throughout the United States and internationally.

As part of Career and Technical Education 21st Century updates at Granite Falls High School, Michael was hired to create a world class manufacturing program. He helped design the new High School facility (built in 2008) and purchase state-of-the-art CNC machines. High-end computer technology was combined with the traditional manual equipment. His goal was to create a program based on real world projects that would allow students to apply high level academics in “research, design and build” team projects blended with hands-on “Old World” skills, as they prepared for STEM careers through manufacturing. Michael currently serves on the Advisory Board of the Center for Excellence in Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing and speaks frequently at CTE and STEM conferences.

At Granite Falls High School, he organized the first ever all-girl team in the world that designed, built and successfully raced a prototype diesel car in the International Shell Eco-Marathon. Among many media features, the “ShopGirls” were highlighted as a “bright spot in CTE education” by US Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, in his speech to Harvard University called “Pathways to Prosperity.” Having accomplished six years in the program, members from both Eco-car teams at the school “ShopGirls” and “UrbanAutos” (the co-ed team) were also the first high school ever to take a car they build to the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah, not for speed but for alternative fuel testing and educational outreach to middle

Jay Leno greeted ShopGirls at Shell Eco-Marathon in Detroit, MI
school students in Utah. The two teams have competed at the annual Shell Eco Americas Marathon—a global competition, and world class venue where high schools, universities and peers from Brazil, Canada, Mexico and Guatemala, are challenged to design and build a car that will travel the farthest distance using the least amount of fuel working with composite materials like carbon fiber-to-machining metal parts.

Michael believes students have fun learning difficult and challenging things when they are engaged and inspired. When asked about his philosophy of teaching, Michael Werner talked about the ShopGirls and their uphill battle as “women in nontraditional roles,” sharing that, “Failures are a normal, healthy part of persistence toward success, and an important element of learning and building self-esteem, as well as confidence. Werner continued, “I passionately believe that it takes engagement to have academic fundamentals evolve into passions, career pathways and an understanding of oneself.” Of the graduating “ShopGirls,” two have been accepted to MIT, one to Stanford University engineering programs, and another to Cal-Poly in pursuit of a career as an Astronautical Engineer. Another is majoring in Computer Engineering at the University of Washington. Other students from the Eco-car programs have received engineering scholarships at in-state universities and a number of the students are locally employed in machining and aerospace with some in apprenticeships.

Superintendent Hall said of Michael Werner, “He is an innovator and role model for the nation. He truly lives his vision to expose new opportunities that will provide students with the pathway from Play in elementary school to developing a Passion in high school to joining a Purpose in the working world.”

**Recognitions Include:**

**2011**—Recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education Arnie Duncan speech at Harvard “Pathways to Prosperity”- MIT Recognition as a “Teacher of Influence”

**2013**—“The Road to Houston” Voted Best Documentary at the International Cannes Corporate Media & TV Awards. Eco Program produced an outreach documentary for 5th grade elementary kids

**2014**—Named ‘Innovative Teacher of the Year’ by the Center for Excellence in Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing

**2015**—Selected to serve on the 2016 Shell Eco-Marathon Americas Steering Committee with emphasis on educational outreach