

HARBOR FREIGHT

TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

MEADVILLE, MISSISSIPPI HIGH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION TEACHER WINS GRAND PRIZE IN 2022 HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS PRIZE FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Kristie Jones and Franklin County Career and Technical Center Share \$100,000 Award

Tuesday, Oct. 4, 2022 MEADVILLE, Mississippi — Kristie Jones, a high school construction and carpentry teacher at Franklin County Career and Technical Center in Meadville, Mississippi, has been named a grand prize winner of the 2022 Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence, winning \$30,000 for herself and \$70,000 for her program.



“I love that my students come to me when they need to talk. I love that they encourage other students to take my class. I love when they are knocking on the classroom door before break ends because they are ready to come to class early. Of course, teaching a trade that I absolutely love is amazing too. We have all heard the saying that if you do what you love, you will never work a day in your life. I am definitely doing what I love, and it rarely feels like work. The opportunity to combine my two passions, teaching and carpentry, is a dream come true.”

Kristie Jones

The mission of Harbor Freight Tools for Schools is to increase understanding, support and investment in skilled trades education in U.S. public high schools.

Overall, there are winners from 15 states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Nebraska, New York, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The winning teachers come from a variety of skilled trades career pathways including automotive, construction, carpentry, industrial technology, welding, agricultural mechanics and machining.

“We cannot overstate the impact that high school skilled trades teachers are having in the classroom. Hands-on skilled trades classes are making a comeback, and we couldn’t be prouder to celebrate the accomplishments of these remarkable teachers and their programs,” said Danny Corwin, executive director of Harbor Freight Tools for Schools.

The Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence was launched in 2017 by Eric Smidt, the founder of national tool retailer Harbor Freight Tools, to recognize outstanding instruction in the skilled trades in U.S. public high schools.

“We deeply appreciate the work skilled trades teachers do to prepare and inspire our next generation of tradespeople,” Smidt said. “Their work is urgently needed, because while our country’s need for building and repairs is growing, our skilled trades workforce is shrinking.”

The 20 winners will split \$1.25 million in prize money. The five grand prize winners will each receive \$100,000, with \$70,000 going to their public high school skilled trades program and \$30,000 to the individual skilled trades teacher behind the winning program. The 15 additional prize winners will each be awarded \$50,000, with \$35,000 going to their public high school skilled trades program and \$15,000 to the teacher. Due to school, district and/or state policy regarding individual cash awards, the schools of several of the winners will receive the entire prize winnings.

The 2022 prize drew a record 768 applications from all 50 states and included three rounds of judging, each by an independent panel of experts from industry, education, trades, philanthropy and civic leadership. The application process, which included responses to questions and a series of video learning modules, was designed to solicit each teacher’s experience, insights and creative ideas about their approach to teaching and success in helping their students achieve excellence in the skilled trades.

In June, the field was narrowed to 50 finalists. The high school skilled trades programs of the 30 finalists who were not named winners today will each receive a \$1,000 gift card from Harbor Freight Tools.

List of \$100,000 grand prize winners:

- Bill Culver – Construction teacher at Evergreen High School in Vancouver, WA
- Cory Torppa – Construction teacher at Kalama High School in Kalama, WA
- Jared Monroe – Automotive Technology teacher at Columbia Area Career Center in Columbia, MO
- Jason Blackwell - Industrial Maintenance teacher at Escambia Career Readiness Center Brewton, AL
- Kristie Jones - Construction and Carpentry teacher at Franklin County Career and Technical Center in Meadville, MS

List of the \$50,000 prize winners:

- Jeff Bearinger – Carpentry teacher at Lumpkin County High School in Dahlonega, GA
- Matt Blomquist – Construction teacher at Taylorville High School in Taylorville, IL
- Ashton Bohling – Industrial Technology teacher at Johnson Brock High School in Johnson, NE
- Joshua Bowles – Carpentry teacher at Alexander Central High School in Taylorsville, NC
- Taylor Donnelly – Agricultural Mechanics teacher at Sheridan High School in Sheridan, AR
- Aaron Ervin – Welding teacher at Pike Lincoln Technical Center in Eolia, MO

- Kevin Finan – Machining teacher at Atlantic Technical College & Technical High School in Coconut Creek, FL
- Blair Jensen – Welding teacher at Jordan Academy for Technology & Careers-South Campus in Riverton, UT
- David Moye – Automotive Technology teacher at Lyman High School in Longwood, FL
- Mark Simmons - Automotive & Diesel Technology teacher at Springfield High School in Springfield, OR
- Leif Sorgule – Industrial Technology teacher at Peru High School in Peru, NY
- John Stratton – Automotive Technology teacher at Oneida-Herkimer-Madison BOCES in New Hartford, NY
- Andrice Tucker - Automotive Technology teacher at Central Nine Career Center in Greenwood, IN
- Jim Van Bladel - Automotive Technology teacher at John Hersey High School in Arlington Heights, IL
- Dan Van Boxtel – Automotive Technology teacher at Kaukauna High School in Kaukauna, WI

About Harbor Freight Tools for Schools

Harbor Freight Tools for Schools is a program of The Smidt Foundation, established by Harbor Freight Tools owner and founder Eric Smidt, to advance excellent skilled trades education in U.S. public high schools. With a deep respect for the dignity of these fields and for the intelligence and creativity of people who work with their hands, Harbor Freight Tools for Schools aims to drive a greater understanding of and investment in skilled trades education, believing that access to quality skilled trades education gives high school students pathways to graduation, opportunity, good jobs and a workforce our country needs. Harbor Freight Tools is a major supporter of the Harbor Freight Tools for Schools program. For more information, visit: harborfreighttoolsforschools.org

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