



CARHARTT HONORS EIGHT SKILLED TRADES EDUCATORS WITH ANNUAL “STEEL APPLE” AWARDS

Workwear brand awards classroom grants and Carhartt gear to educators preparing the next generation of skilled trades workers

Key takeaways:

- Carhartt honored eight skilled trades educators with its second annual Steel Apple Awards, recognizing high school and higher education instructors preparing the next generation for careers in the skilled trades.
- Each Steel Apple Award honoree received a classroom grant and Carhartt surprised the teachers and their students with new gear during celebrations at the schools.
- Carhartt worked with the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) to identify honorees in construction, welding and advanced manufacturing, and teamed up with TechForce Foundation through its Ford partnership to recognize automotive technology educators.
- The awards come as new research from the Alliance for America's Skilled Trades, of which Carhartt is a founding member, finds that training programs are preparing just 55 skilled trades workers for every 100 needed.

DEARBORN, Mich., October 27, 2026 – A great teacher can change the course of a student's life, and for many young people entering the skilled trades, that starts in the shop, garage or classroom. Today, Carhartt announced the eight recipients of its second annual Steel Apple Awards, recognizing outstanding educators from across the country who are helping students build rewarding careers in the skilled trades.

Through these awards, Carhartt is investing directly in the classroom. Each Steel Apple honoree received a \$10,000 grant to fund and expand their trade education program. To celebrate their achievements, Carhartt surprised the winning educators at their schools with special classroom celebrations and provided the honorees and their students with new Carhartt gear.

The recognition comes at a critical time for America's skilled trades workforce. New research from the [Alliance for America's Skilled Trades](#) found that for every 100 skilled trades workers needed, training programs are currently preparing just 55. And while young people are increasingly interested in these careers, they do not always have clear guidance on how to pursue them: nearly nine in 10 high school counselors recommend a four-year degree, compared with just over half who recommend trade school and only one in four who recommend a trade apprenticeship.

“Young people are interested in the skilled trades, but interest only becomes opportunity when someone helps show them the way,” said Todd Corley, Chief People & Impact Officer at Carhartt. “That’s what these amazing teachers do every day. They give students hands-on experience, help them build confidence and show them what a future in the trades can look like. Through the Steel Apple Awards, we’re proud to recognize these teachers and give them more resources to keep doing what they do best – preparing the next generation of hardworking people for meaningful careers in the skilled trades.”

Meet the 2026 Carhartt Steel Apple Award Honorees

Carhartt worked with its longtime skilled trades partners, the National Center for Construction

Education and Research (NCCER) to identify four standout educators in the fields of construction, welding and advanced manufacturing.

- Kora Huffman, Carpentry & Advanced Manufacturing Instructor, Kelly Walsh High School (Casper, WY)
- Michael Manuel, Construction Teacher, David H. Ponitz Career Technology Center (Dayton, OH)
- Joshua O'Neal, CTE Welding Instructor, Hemet Unified School District (Hemet, CA)
- Aaron Swett, Construction Technology Instructor, Oakland Schools Technical Center Northeast (Pontiac, MI)

"Great instructors change the trajectory of a student's life," said Boyd Worsham, President & CEO at NCCER. "They give young people the skills, confidence and encouragement to see what's possible and build rewarding futures in construction. NCCER is proud to partner with Carhartt to celebrate these outstanding educators and support the important work happening in their classrooms every day."

New this year, Carhartt partnered with TechForce Foundation through its partnership with Ford, to identify and recognize four outstanding auto technology teachers with Steel Apple Awards.

- Bobby Cooper, Automotive Technology Instructor, Tennessee College of Applied Technology - Knoxville (Knoxville, TN)
- Mike Coughlin, Associate Professor of Automotive Technology, State University of New York Erie Community College (Orchard Park, NY)
- Paul Frye, Director, Automotive Technology Program, William R. Moore College of Technology (Memphis, TN)
- Kristopher Young, Automotive Technology Instructor, Henry Ford College (Dearborn, MI)

"Behind every successful technician is someone who believed in their potential and helped them find their path," said Jennifer Maher, CEO, TechForce Foundation. "Instructors are often that person. They do so much more than teach technical skills. They build confidence, open doors and help students see a future they may not have imagined for themselves. We're proud to partner with Carhartt to recognize these educators and invest in the next generation of skilled technicians."

"As educators, there's nothing more rewarding than seeing students gain confidence in their abilities and discover a career path they're passionate about," said Kristopher Young, a Steel Apple recipient from Henry Ford College. "This grant will have a direct impact on our students by helping us invest in the tools, equipment and learning experiences they will encounter in the real workplace. We're incredibly thankful for the support from Carhartt and the lasting impact this grant will have on our students for years to come."

Carhartt's Commitment to the Skilled Trades

For more than 137 years, Carhartt has served the people who build, fix, grow and make the world around us. Today, the company is investing in the people, programs and organizations helping the next generation pursue careers in the skilled trades.

That commitment includes the Steel Apple Awards and the "For the Love of Labor" grant program – Carhartt's ongoing initiative to support local organizations working to close the skilled trades gap in their communities. Carhartt is proud to announce a \$150,000 "For the Love of Labor" grant to NCCER to help introduce Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to

high schools through NCCER's High School Builder Program. Additionally, Carhartt awarded \$160,000 to TechForce Foundation in September to help aspiring automotive technicians access scholarships, training resources and career support. To date, the "For the Love of Labor" program has awarded 29 grants totaling nearly \$3.7 million since the program's launch in 2022.

Carhartt is also a founding member of the Alliance for America's Skilled Trades, a coalition working to expand access to skilled trades training, strengthen career pathways and scale workforce development approaches that are working across the country. The Alliance's inaugural [*State of America's Skilled Trades*](#) report, developed with Jobs for the Future and the Burning Glass Institute, found that the U.S. needs to fill approximately 1.7 million skilled trades job openings through 2035. The research points to career exposure, mentoring and practical support as opportunities to help more people successfully enter and complete skilled trades training.

WATCH THIS VIDEO to learn more about Carhartt's Steel Apple Awards and meet the educators helping build the future of the skilled trades. For more information, visit steelapple.carhartt.com.

About Carhartt

Established in 1889, Carhartt is a global premium workwear brand with a rich heritage of developing durable products for workers on and off the job. Headquartered in Dearborn, Michigan, with approximately 3,000 employees worldwide, Carhartt is family-owned and managed by the descendants of the company's founder, Hamilton Carhartt. For more information, visit www.carhartt.com.

About NCCER

The National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit education foundation and the leading provider of construction education for industry and career and technical education programs. With flexible workforce development and learning solutions, NCCER's programs provide consistency and quality to ensure craft professionals and learners receive industry-recognized credentials and certifications. To learn more, visit www.nccer.org.

About TechForce Foundation

TechForce Foundation is a national not-for-profit 501(c)(3) transforming how students pursue skilled technician careers. Through its modern workforce development platform, TechForce guides more than 100,000 students and working technicians along their career journey, connecting them to more than \$6.5 million in annual scholarships, wraparound support, apprenticeships, and employment opportunities. Operating in all 50 states and U.S. territories and partnering with more than 1,400 schools, TechForce champions technicians across industries, including automotive, diesel, collision repair, aviation, marine, motorcycle, HVAC, welding, and emerging technologies. As a scalable, data-driven ecosystem, TechForce connects talent to opportunity at every stage of the workforce pipeline. For more information, visit techforce.org. Follow us on [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

For Carhartt:

Alex DiFilippo
Carhartt, Inc.

adifilippo@carhartt.com