



# WMCI NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2023



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JEN SCHOTTKE

When we imagined the West Michigan Construction Institute many years ago, we knew one of our highest priorities would be launching programming for high school students so they may explore and connect to the commercial construction industry. As we near the completion of our first full academic year of programming, I am delighted to share the impact this priority has had on the students we serve and the industry we support.

*“The benefits of graduating from WMCI are impacting the rest of my life, giving me a step up in my career of choice. Thank you for supporting WMCI and giving me the chance to be happy to go to school in the morning.”*  
– Jonas, GRPS Montessori High School Senior (WMCI 2023 graduate)

Our work-based learning program took off from there and we welcomed four new school district partners in the 2022-2023 academic year and doubled the number of high school students in our program. This spring, those students will graduate with their NCCER Core and Carpentry I certifications, OSHA 10 certification, and first/aid CPR certification. Many of our graduating seniors already have job offers waiting for them after they conclude their high school careers. One of the most rewarding parts of my career is hearing about and seeing when a student has an “aha” moment about a construction career they are interested in.

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NEWSLETTER

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

JEN SCHOTTKE

Alex, a senior from Kelloggsville High School, said it best, "One aspect I like about the work-based learning program that has made an impact on me is the amount of individuals you meet in the industry and the amount of connections you can make. I have met a lot of great people who I have learned a lot from."

Continuing our growth and impact is at the core of our work, and I'm delighted to share that we received over 60 applications for our 2023-2024 work-based learning program including two new school district partners. I couldn't be more excited about the growth of WMCI and the impact this program is having on our region's high school students and the future of the commercial construction industry.

Whether you're a school district partner, WMCI student parent or guardian, generous donor, or construction industry partner – thank you for supporting the WMCI work-based learning program and the students who expressed an interest in learning more about our incredible construction industry.

Yours for the construction industry,  
Jen Schottke, President



## MEET OUR STUDENTS

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE NEXT YEAR'S CLASS?



Alex, Junior  
Kelloggsville  
High School

Never say no to an opportunity. Learn as many things as you can from the guest speakers that come in to talk to you because that information is very valuable and can help you in the future.



Billie, Senior  
CA Frost High  
School

Work hard, apply yourself, and you WILL succeed. Making mistakes is part of learning, so take them in stride and use that knowledge to propel yourself in the future.



Lucas, Junior  
Comstock Park High  
School

Always bring PPE. Pay attention to the little details and try to be in class on time. This is a big opportunity for you that can take you far in life.

# OUR DONORS CARE: DONOR INTERVIEW

DON & KELLY BUIST, BUIST SHEET METAL



*What lead you to donate to WMCI?*

We have seen first hand the positive impacts that solid training and mentorship can have on team members not only at work but also in their personal lives. The work that WMCI is doing to educate each person with the goals of greater community impact speaks to our own personal desires to invest in the people who work with us and also the community in which we live and work. We have been encouraged by the WMCI students we have met through the program and we are excited for this opportunity to join with you to positively impact the WMCI organization and our greater community through the next generation of construction professionals.

*What do you think sets WMCI apart from other trade schools or similar organizations?*

A few things come to mind about what makes WMCI unique. The first is that WMCI values today's construction workforce as smart – working with both their heads and their hands. Promoting this smart workforce rather than the images from the construction industry of yesteryear will help continue to draw good students into the trades and continue to build respect for those who choose not to pursue a college degree. Beyond that, WMCI is educating students and opening doors to the opportunities in the skilled trades and leading them not just to jobs, but long term career opportunities.

Over the past year, Buist Sheet Metal has hired two WMCI students after they graduated high school and the Work-Based Learning program.



## MEET OUR STUDENTS

WHAT AREA OF CONSTRUCTION DO YOU WANT TO GO INTO?



**Kelwin, Junior**  
Southwest Middle  
High School

I want to become a site safety technician after high school. I'm also interested in becoming a site manager like my uncle.



**Braxton, Junior**  
Northview Next  
Career Center

Welding and Plumbing, I've always liked working with my hands so those trades seem like a good fit.



**Jonas, Senior**  
Grand Rapids  
Montessori

I'm interested in is heavy equipment operations, I think it would be fun to drive around big equipment and learn all about them.



# STUDENT & COURSE UPDATES



2X

We have doubled our high school work-based learning enrollment from Fall 2022.



40%

We have seen a 40% increase in our craft training enrollment following the addition of 3 new trades.



70%

Our professional development courses have had a 70% increase in enrollment since Spring 2022.



## LEARN FROM THE EXPERT

CLARK CAUSLEY, CARPENTRY INSTRUCTOR

I started as a laborer but quickly recognized the opportunities to move up. And the more on-the-job skills I picked up, the faster leadership rewarded the work I did with promotions up the ladder. It became very clear to me that, in the skilled trades, if you have the mindset and the work ethic, then the sky's the limit! After just five years I was running a small crew on my own.

**"MY JOB IS NOT TO KNOW ALL THE ANSWERS, BUT TO KNOW WHERE TO GET THE ANSWERS."**

One of my favorite things about projects like this is the experience of working together with members of other skilled trades on the jobsite. The lead electrician and plumber are especially very talented problem-solvers and I love learning from their expertise. It's great to collaborate with other West Michigan companies to build a beautiful new structure that both our teams and our clients are proud of.



Clark works at Lakewood Construction as a Superintendent.