



Carhartt 2026 Steel Apple Award Winners



Bobby Cooper

Automotive Technology Instructor, Tennessee College of Applied Technology-Knoxville
Knoxville, TN

With 33 years of dealership experience as an ASE Master Technician, Bobby Cooper brings real-world expertise to the classroom. From steering and suspension to electrical systems and emerging technologies, he helps students develop the technical skills and confidence to pursue careers in the automotive industry.



Mike Coughlin

Associate Professor of Automotive Technology, State University of New York Erie Community College
Buffalo, NY

Mike Coughlin began his automotive career in SUNY Erie's Ford ASSET program, becoming a shop foreman before returning as an instructor. For more than a decade, he has mentored future automotive technicians, helping students build the hands-on skills, confidence and professionalism needed to succeed in an evolving industry.



Paul Frye

Director of Moore Tech Automotive Program, William R. Moore College of Technology
Memphis, TN

A GM and ASE Master Technician with 25 years of teaching experience, Paul Frye leads Moore Tech's automotive program with a focus on opening doors for the next generation. Through practical training and industry partnerships, he helps students gain the skills, confidence and connections to enter the automotive workforce.



Kora Huffman

Carpentry & Advanced Manufacturing Instructor, Kelly Walsh High School
Casper, WY

Kora Huffman brings carpentry and advanced manufacturing to life through hands-on projects that connect classroom learning to real-world opportunities. She also supports aspiring trades professionals through SkillsUSA, serving as an advisor and technical chair for statewide competitions.



Michael Manuel

Construction Teacher, Ponitz Career Technology Center
Dayton, OH

Michael Manuel believes mentorship can help students see a future for themselves in the skilled trades. At Ponitz Career Technology Center, he creates an inclusive, student-centered learning environment where aspiring construction professionals can build practical skills, confidence and a foundation for their careers.



Joshua O'Neal

CTE Welding Instructor Hemet Unified School District
Hemet, CA

Drawing on more than 20 years of experience in construction, industrial maintenance, mining and heavy equipment operations, Joshua O'Neal brings extensive industry knowledge to his welding instruction. Now in his eighth year of teaching, he helps students develop practical skills and explore opportunities across the skilled trades.



Aaron Swett

Construction Technology Instructor, Oakland Schools Technical Center
Northeast
Pontiac, MI

A licensed builder, Aaron Swett gives students firsthand experience in construction through hands-on projects that include building full-scale homes. He also prepares students for SkillsUSA carpentry competitions, helping the next generation of builders develop technical skills, confidence and pride in their work.



Kristopher Young

Automotive Technology Instructor, Henry Ford College
Dearborn, MI

With 21 years of teaching experience, Kristopher Young helps students turn an interest in automotive technology into a career. As a leader of Henry Ford College's manufacturer-specific training program, he expands access to industry tools, technical knowledge and hands-on experience that prepare students for the workforce.