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HCCA National Semifinalist for \$50,000 to \$100,000 Cash Prize

HARBOR FREIGHT
TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

HOUSTON COUNTY, GA – Houston County Career Academy (HCCA) teachers are among 52 teachers and teacher teams named semifinalists for the Harbor Freight Tools for Schools 2018 Prize for Teaching Excellence. Eighteen

winners across the U.S will be chosen to share \$1 million in cash prizes.

The Career Academy team consists of:

- Lucus Fletcher, HVAC;
- Antonio Shelley, Industrial Maintenance, dual-enrollment program with Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC);
- John Ward, Welding, dual-enrollment program with CGTC;
- George Rosenbald, Automotive, dual-enrollment program with CGTC; and
- Steve Waters, Fine Furniture and Cabinet Making.

Three of the team members are dual enrollment instructors with CGTC - Industrial Maintenance, Welding and Automotive. The teachers were chosen from more than 500 applicants. Semifinalists represent 27 states and specialize in trades ranging from construction and carpentry to automotive repair, welding, advanced manufacturing and agriculture mechanics.

After two more rounds of judging, 18 first- and second-place winners will be announced on Nov. 15. The winners will share \$1 million in total cash awards, with three first-place winners each awarded \$100,000. In addition, 15 second-place winners will each be awarded \$50,000.

“Making it to the semifinals is a true testament of collaboration,” commented Principal Sabrina Phelps. “One recurring theme was the need to dispel the myth of today’s manufacturing. At our Houston County Career Academy, economic development is the core of our purpose. We’re preparing students for Houston County’s workforce. With the winnings, our goal is to update tools and equipment in the trades and industry programs. We want our classrooms to mirror what the students will see in business and industry. Winning this scholarship will be most beneficial to our students, school, and community.”

The team represents diverse backgrounds and skillsets. Fletcher has taught HVAC for four years, after retiring from the U.S. Air Force, Shelley has 21 years of combined industry and classroom experience. Ward has taught for nine years and also has 20 years of experience in the welding industry. Rosenbald has taught the automotive program for eight years, following a career in the industry spanning more than 36 years. Waters has been teaching fine furniture and cabinet making for 15 years.

For the second round, semifinalists will respond to online video learning modules led by experts and designed to solicit insights and creative ideas about teaching practices and how to inspire students to succeed in the skilled trades. Each round of winners is selected by separate panels of judges independent of Harbor Freight Tools for Schools.

“These semifinalists represent amazing depth and breadth in high school skilled trades education, and they exhibit incredible enthusiasm for teaching students to work with their hands, to love learning and be prepared for the future,” said Danny Corwin, executive director of Harbor Freight Tools for Schools. “We are thrilled to recognize their exceptional teaching and to raise the profile of their excellent work through these awards.”

“Skilled trades teachers are unsung heroes,” said Harbor Freight Tools Founder Eric Smidt. “They teach our students skills that help them in life and in careers. We respect and value the men and women who work with their hands to design, build and repair homes, schools, hospitals and businesses in our towns and cities, as well as our cars, trucks and tractors. These skilled and creative workers keep our communities thriving. At the same time, there are now hundreds of thousands of great skilled trades job openings, and that number is expected to grow. We want to elevate the dignity and importance of this work by recognizing exceptional skilled trades teachers from our country’s public schools who open the door to learning and opportunity.”

The HCCA is the district’s charter school. It was created in 2010 with a mission to ensure a viable workforce for Houston County. Career Academy administrators and teachers work closely with local industry to align their program with community workforce needs.

The school is located at 1311 Corder Road in Warner Robins. For more information, Principal Phelps may be reached at 478-322-3280 or Sabrina.Phelps@hcbe.net. You may also visit <https://harborfreighttoolsforschools.org>.

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