

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Nov. 15, 2018

**Contact:** Mary Fergus

Phone: 847-888-5000, ext.4160

## **U-46 Instructor Wins National Teaching Prize**

*Streamwood High's precision manufacturing teacher Matt Erbach wins \$50,000 prize for education excellence*



**STREAMWOOD** - A precision manufacturing teacher from Streamwood High School has won second place in the 2018 Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence, earning him and his school's skilled trades program \$50,000 as part of \$1 million awarded nationally.

SHS teacher Matt Erbach was one of 15 national second-place winners announced Thursday (Nov. 15) in the 2018 Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence program and the only educator from Illinois.

Representatives from Harbor Freight joined Streamwood High Principal Michele Chapman and School District U-46 officials at SHS to surprise Erbach with the award. Watch the video [here](#).

“Matt is a terrific teacher. He cares so much about his precision manufacturing program, and he has had so much success with his students,” Chapman said. “He advocates for his students with outside partners and brings his students to competitions and wins!”

The award from Harbor Freight Tools for Schools includes a \$35,000 donation to Streamwood High and a \$15,000 award to Erbach, who was a semifinalist in the 2017 contest. Harbor Freight Tools for Schools also gave the high school a “trophy cart,” a tool cart with a plaque to commemorate Erbach’s achievement.

More than 500 skilled trades teachers applied for the award, which recognizes outstanding skilled trade educators and programs in U.S. schools. This year, the Smidt Foundation, which operates the Harbor Freight Tools for Schools program, awarded \$1 million to teachers and schools across the country.

In making the award, Harbor Freight Tools for Schools cited Erbach’s broad background in both education and private industry, his dedication to his own continued professional development, and the supportive environment he creates for his students in the precision manufacturing program.

In School District U-46 precision manufacturing classes, students receive hands-on training in precision measurement and the operations of lathe, milling, and grinding machines. Teachers emphasize designing a production process and providing instruction that prepares students for the computer numerical control systems that are prevalent in today’s clean, modern world of manufacturing. Precision manufacturing is also taught at South Elgin High School.

“We are not only proud of Matt, but also grateful to shine a light on the importance of ensuring our students graduate with the high-level skills

needed to succeed in both post-secondary education and the workforce,” said Kinasha Brown, U-46 Director of Educational Pathways.

Erbach has been a teacher in U-46 for more than 10 years, and he taught at three other District high schools – Bartlett, Elgin, and Larkin – before joining the Streamwood faculty. He had his first exposure to precision manufacturing while working at a Barrington company before he earned a degree in education from Northern Illinois University. In 2014, Erbach was awarded a master’s degree in workforce development from Southern Illinois University.

“The creativity and hands-on projects that Mr. Erbach and the other winning teachers bring to their classrooms is an inspiration,” said Danny Corwin, executive director of Harbor Freight Tools for Schools. “This is education at its best, and we are humbled to honor these teachers and shine a light on excellence in skilled trades education.”

Three \$100,000 first-place prizes were awarded to a welding teacher from Georgia, a building trades teacher from Michigan, and an industrial diesel mechanics teacher from Ohio, with the prize winnings split between the individual teacher or team and their high school’s skilled trades program.

The prize was started in 2017 by Harbor Freight Tools founder and CEO Eric Smidt to recognize extraordinary public high school skilled trades teachers and programs with a proven track record of dedication and performance.

###

*School District U-46 serves nearly 39,000 students from 11 communities within Cook, DuPage, and Kane counties. The 57 District schools and programs are located across 90 square miles. To learn more, visit the [U-46 website](#), or like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#).*