

## An A+ for technology teaching

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN  
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Awards are nothing new to Carl Hader, the Grafton High School teacher whose students have garnered dozens of state and national honors in automotive and technology

contests during the past 34 years.

But even Hader, whose individual honors include Wisconsin High School Educator of the Year, was taken aback by his latest accolade. He was recently chosen for the Wisconsin Technology Education Association's Lifetime Achievement Award, making him one of only seven people to receive the recognition since 1970.

He is the first Ozaukee County teacher chosen for the honor.



"I am absolutely awed and moved to be in the same category of achievement with the other six winners," said Hader, who has taught at Grafton High since 1979. "It's a great honor that comes from a jury of my peers."

Those peers include the WTEA board of directors, who chose Hader for the award after he was nominated by one of its members.

Many people know Hader as the leader of a technology program that has become the envy of other schools. Under his guidance, Grafton automotive students have qualified for national contests 23 times since 1994 and earned 17 top-10 finishes, including three championships.

In the SkillsUSA technology competition, Hader's students have posted eight top-10 finishes at the national level, including three titles.

Hader was chosen Ozaukee County Educator of the Year in 2002, named a Herb Kohl Fellow in 2006 and in 2007 became the first technology teacher selected Wisconsin High School Educator of the Year.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in industrial arts at the University of Wisconsin-Stout in 1979, Hader went on to earn a master's degree at National-Louis University in 2006. The topic of his master's research project was integrating math and science into high school automotive

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curriculum — an area of expertise that has served him and his students well.

Other educators agreed that Hader set the bar for automotive service technology programs in Wisconsin high schools, developing and distributing the first statewide curriculum based on national standards.

“I was never satisfied with following others’ pilot programs or teaching from a canned curriculum,” Hader said.

“I’m a firm believer in a one-size-fits-one curriculum design that meshes national standards to local school facilities.”

Through the years, Hader lobbied for requiring automotive teachers to be certified by the National Institute for Automotive Excellence, believing that they should become experts in their educational fields.

“I constantly remind automotive educators that we are all unique in balancing our technical ability, instructional delivery, facility management and the understated need to remain current in a subject matter that drives the economic progress of the country,” he said.

“Doing this job is like no other. The work is intense, but so is the satisfaction.”

Hader said many people measure the success of his technology program by the achievements of his students in contests, but he cited a more important benchmark.

“It’s really an award about forward thinking, working outside the box before it was fashionable and continuing to do so for a long time,” he said.

At Grafton, working outside the box has meant retooling school curriculum to include more engineering-based concepts and building mock-ups and workstations that use actual automotive parts and systems rather than computer simulations.

Hader has served as a mentor to other teachers, as well, working through a summer program to help auto instructors follow national standards.

He praised the longtime support he’s received from school officials, including retired Grafton High technology education teacher Steve Kittleson.

“I’ve been blessed with a forward-thinking school and administration and a community that respects reaching for the sky,” Hader said. “Although I’m not working in the largest, newest facility, it’s certainly been one where I could make an impact.

“The local automotive businesses have always been there for me, too — dealerships, independents, parts stores, car clubs. It takes a community to earn an award like this.”

Hader wasn’t about to forget the support he’s gotten from his family, including his parents Lyle

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and Charlotte Hader of Newburg, wife Sally and their two children — Steve, 26, and Sarah, 23.

Hader will be presented with the lifetime achievement award during the annual WTEA convention March 14 and 15 in Wisconsin Dells.

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Image Information: SHARING HIS knowledge of automotive technology with his students — including current class members Alex Conrad (left) and Cody Boesch — has been a longtime passion of teacher Carl Hader.