

WA-CCER



Fall 2025 Newsletter

Washington Association for Career Counseling & Employment Readiness

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome Back, WA-CCER Educators!

Welcome back to a brand-new school year! I hope your summer was filled with the rest, relaxation, and adventures you were looking for. Personally, my “perfect” summer included plenty of yard work, gardening, closet cleaning, and—when I wasn’t being productive—some serious binge-watching on Netflix and Amazon. Of course, all from my recliner with a cat in my lap!

This past August, the WA-ACTE Summer Conference was truly inspiring. Our keynote speaker, Corinne Hoisington, shared her expertise on the rapidly evolving world of Artificial Intelligence (AI). I was amazed by the wealth of resources AI puts at our fingertips and just how simple it can be to use. Since then, I feel like I see AI everywhere—and I’ve already used ChatGPT to create forms, surveys, resumes, and yes... even this newsletter article.

If you’d like to dive deeper into the possibilities of AI in education, you’ll have another opportunity to hear Corinne speak. She will be the keynote presenter at the WA-ACTE Fall Conference at Great Wolf Lodge. You can find details and registration information here:

◆◆ [WA-ACTE Fall Conference Information](#)

Looking ahead, WA-CCER is excited to host our annual Spring Conference in Yakima, tentatively scheduled for April 2026. Stay tuned for more information—we can’t wait to connect, learn, and grow together.

This year, we’re also launching a new feature in our newsletters: a Spotlight on both a WA-CCER member and a CTE program. CTE across Washington is constantly evolving, with innovative programs and passionate educators creating opportunities for students every day. If you’d like your program to be highlighted, please reach out—I would love to celebrate the great work happening in your schools!

Finally, I want to thank each of you for the incredible work you do on behalf of students across Washington. We know this year may bring challenges, but I also know that together we can support one another and continue to open doors for the students we serve. Let’s make this school year a great one!

— Nora Zollweg, WA-CCER President



Meet Marie Miller

Career Readiness/Work-Based Learning Coordinator at NEW Tech Skills Center

1. What do you enjoy most about working at in Career & Technical Education? What I love most about CTE is helping students with real-life skills, like those soft skills they need for networking and technology skills. I love technology and learning how different industries use technology. Another thing I love is networking with community partners. At NEWTech, we have two registered pre-apprenticeships for our Construction/Welding Technology programs and our Energy Power program. It is fun to connect with the apprenticeship coordinators and construction industry people. At NEWTech, students will find a variety of programs in Health Sciences, Professional Services, and Skilled Trades departments. Alongside the students, I get to work with those industry folks, helping set up internships, organizing mock interviews, and networking on behalf of our programs. Those of us in career readiness work are essentially developing our workforce. Every day is different, and I am constantly meeting new people—which I love! It is also so rewarding to see students graduate and get into careers about which they are passionate.

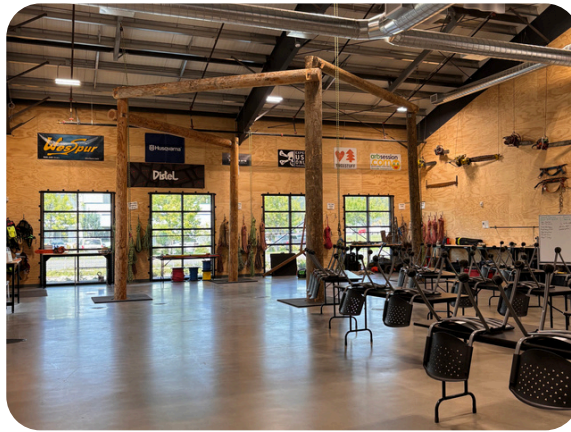
2. What inspired you to work in your field/role? I accidentally happened upon CTE. I started my education in elementary education, then in special education. I really wanted to be a high school English teacher, but my family thought I should teach elementary ed because I am a pushover. Midway through, my dad talked me into switching to accounting. I hated it—so after a year in the accounting department, my college advisor told me about CTE. I changed my degree to business and marketing, and I loved it. A year after I graduated, I pursued my masters in at-risk youth from Gonzaga University. I have a passion for high school kids and especially those who need an extra helping hand.

3. What's one accomplishment you're most proud of? Professionally I am most proud of earning my National Board certification in CTE. I certified in one year, and it was HARD! It was more work intensive than my masters degree, but well worth it!

4. What do you enjoy doing outside of work (hobbies, family, community involvement)? Outside of work, I am always busy. Besides working on committees for WACCER, I cycle, run, and do Zumba. I have many hobbies, including crocheting, sewing, gardening, and any new craft I find. I also belong to two book clubs because I love to read, and I am a Toastmaster. This year, I am vice president of membership—so if you live in Spokane, visit our club! I also volunteer for the Democrats — I think everyone should vote and work together. Democrats and Republicans both have valuable contributions to make to our country. I also co-facilitate a grief support group that I started with a friend at my church. The thing I love doing most is hanging out with my five grandchildren and traveling with them and their parents (my kids). In the last three years, we have traveled to Disney World, Disneyland, and Hawaii. I can't wait for our next adventure!

5. Share a fun fact about yourself that most people don't know. I have participated in the STP—Seattle to Portland bike ride three times. My last ride was the summer of 2023, and I did my best time—120 miles, on the first day in 11 hours. I forget my time on day two but it wasn't bad for a short grandma.

SPRING CONFERENCE: CONNECTING EDUCATION & INDUSTRY



Connecting Education and Industry

Thank you to everyone who joined the WACCER Spring Conference on April 24–25, 2025! This dynamic two-day event focused on strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Work-Based Learning (WBL) through collaboration, industry insights, and hands-on experiences.

Thursday: Social Kickoff

We started with a warm social at Kevin Doyle's home in Vancouver—great food, drinks, and lively conversations set the tone for an inspiring event.

Friday: Inspiration and Industry Connections

The day began at Prairie Electric with keynote Cindy Arnold, CTE Director for Battle Ground Public Schools, sharing data linking CTE participation to a 100% graduation rate among CTSO students like SkillsUSA. Prairie Electric also offered a facility tour and discussed work-based learning roles for students under 18.

Next, Battle Ground High School hosted visits to top CTE programs in Construction, Agriculture, Floral Design, Jewelry, and the Career Center.

At Tapani Underground, attendees enjoyed a working lunch and a panel with supervisors and students about real-world learning. Derek Huegel, Wolf Industries founder, spoke on the booming tiny homes market and his entrepreneurial start in high school. Jon Girod of Quail Homes highlighted the Careers in Construction initiative, which recently led to 175+ interviews, 30 job offers, and 26 hires at an average \$23/hour wage. The NW Lineman Training Center also showcased career training in the utility sector.

This conference highlighted how strong partnerships between schools and local businesses build effective pathways from classroom to career.

Thank You!

Special thanks to our hosts, speakers, panelists, and coordinators Cindy Arnold, Debbie Smith, Kris Neal, Dana Selby, Jennifer Miller, Kevin Doyle, for a successful event. We look forward to continuing this momentum!

submitted by: Marie Miller

SCHOLARSHIP NEWS

Congratulations to our 2025 WACCER Scholarship Recipients

Elizabeth Newman is from Columbia River HS (Cascadia Technical Academy)– Vancouver SD and was nominated by Katie Siewart – WACCER member. Elizabeth is going into the Criminal Justice Program at CWU to pursue a degree in Psychology and Law & Justice. She plans to enroll in the FBI training program post college to prepare to be a Behavioral Analyst agent. She is currently working two jobs and gives numerous volunteer hours. She has a 3.5 cum GPA!

Joshua Myers is from Toppenish High School and was nominated by Lauren Thomas – WACCER Member. He is in Computer Science & Pre-Engineering Apprenticeship. He will continue his studies at Gonzaga where he will major in Mechanical Engineering. He plans to work in underserved communities post college to bring access to reliable and efficient resources. He has a 3.85 cum GPA!

WA-CCER is Expanding Scholarship Opportunities!

This year WACCER is expanding and will offer four \$1000 scholarships. Two scholarships will be granted to university bound students and two scholarships will be for students pursuing opportunities at technical colleges, trades or apprenticeships. We will open the 2026 WACCER Scholarship in January. All WACCER members are encouraged to promote this opportunity to their students.

2024 - 2025 WACCER AWARDS



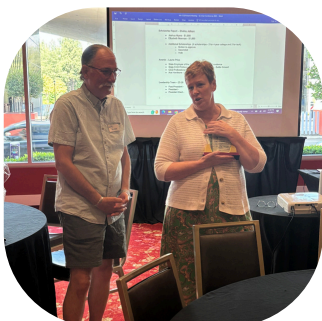
WA-ACTE Career
Guidance Counselor:
Debbie Smith, Battle
Ground Public Schools



WA-CCER Counseling &
Career Development
Professional:
Dana Selby, Vancouver
Public Schools



WA-ACTE Bus Ed
Partnership: Meg
Lindsay, Workforce
Development, Spokane



WA-CCER CTE Lifetime
Achievement Award & Hall of
Fame Award: Tim Knue, WA-
ACTE Executive Director,
Retired

WA-CCER Award of Merit
for employer of the year:
Griggs Ace Hardware,
Richland