Illinois Principals Association Awards 2023 Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award to Johnsburg High School Principal and Gus Schmid of Johnsburg

Kevin Shelton, Principal of Johnsburg High School, Johnsburg, and Gus Schmid of Johnsburg have received the 2023 Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award for their partnership to provide equipment for Career and Technical Education opportunities in the district. The award is presented by the Illinois Principals Association and sponsored by Horace Mann Companies.

The Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award was created to recognize an IPA principal or assistant principal, and an agency, association, or community member displaying an outstanding effort in creating partnerships between schools, principals, associations, and organizations for the betterment of all.

An ongoing partnership between Kevin Shelton and Gus Schmid has made an incredible impact on Johnsburg High School, providing JHS students with learning opportunities that wouldn't exist without it. The partnership began when the two met at the annual Skills USA State Competition in 2019. When Mr. Schmid, attending as a parent, learned that the JHS photography students were missing the necessary materials to compete, he volunteered to help get supplies at local stores. Shortly after this event, Mr. Shelton encouraged Mr. Schmid to become more involved with the JHS Career and Technology Education program.

Mr. Schmid, an active community member, parent, and alumni of JHS, has helped update equipment and facilities for the best possible learning environment for JHS students. In 2019-20 school year, Mr. Schmid requested a grant from the McHenry County Cooperative for Employment Education to provide $2,000 for mobile lab toolbox kits for use at school or home (especially helpful during the early stages of the pandemic), and $55,000 for a John Deere Heavy Equipment Simulator for heavy diesel students. With the support of the McHenry County Cooperative, Johnsburg High became the only high school in Illinois to have the same model simulator used by the Local 150 Operators Union.

Mr. Schmid continued his grant writing and donation requests for the following equipment to help create two new, modern CTE labs at Johnsburg High School:

- $15,000 Skills USA/Lowes Grant
- Navistar donation of 18 six-ton jacks, 4 ten-ton jacks, and 6 rolling toolboxes
- 16 Echo Weed Trimmers for small engines lab
- $2,000 Stanley/Black and Decker Grant
- 2 Miller Mobilarc Augmented Reality Welding System Simulators
- 24 new Briggs & Stratton engines for small engines lab
- 10 electrical training kits/training aids

“The contributions that Gus has provided to our CTE program have been transformative,” said Cathy Neiss, Board Member of Johnsburg School District 12. “Gus’s dedication has allowed our CTE program to be recognized by the Associated Equipment Distributors Association. This is a rare designation in the
state and the country. The University of Illinois has also reached out to find ways to replicate our program and receive guidance from Gus. Several companies have contacted Gus to develop partnerships with our excellent program and have provided financial support and machines for our students to use and observe. The time, effort, and energy from Gus and Kevin have provided Johnsburg students with meaningful experiences and the prospect of successful futures.”

The Illinois Principals Association serves over 6,000 educational leaders statewide, whose mission is to develop, support, and advocate for innovative educational leaders. The Reaching Out & Building Bridges Award is supported by Horace Mann Companies of Springfield, IL. For more information about the IPA, please visit www.ilprincipals.org.

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