

Crawford Tech administrator recognized

By Mike Crowley
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The job is about much more than numbers, but the numbers tell a pretty impressive story.

Crawford Tech's 163 cooperative education students worked nearly 59,000 hours during the 2024-25 school year and made more than \$765,000 doing so. By law, their hourly wages must be at least the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, but in reality they tend to be much higher.

For students in the capstone co-op program, where the job is directly related to the student's field of study at the school, wages ranged from \$9 per hour all the way to \$21 per hour, with an average of \$14.53. More than 40 of the capstone co-op students received hourly wages in the \$15 to \$21 tier.

For those in the diversified occupations program, which allows students to pursue on-the-job training in areas that are unavailable for study at Crawford Tech, hourly wages ranged from \$7.25 to \$19 with an average of \$12.10 and six students in the \$15 to \$19 tier.

"Isn't that amazing?" asked Bonnie Stein, the school's senior co-op education coordinator, after a quick glance through the numbers on Friday. "I think the taxpayers need to know that our students are contributing to our local taxes."

Stein and Tina Cutshall-Craft, Crawford Tech's other co-op education coordinator, aren't the only ones wowed by the performance of students in the program. Officials at the Pennsylvania Cooperative Education Association were impressed as well — so impressed that they honored Stein with the 2025-26 Don Gamble Award as the top co-op coordinator in the state. The award is named for a groundbreaking coordinator who worked in career and technical



Bonnie Stein

Stein

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

education in Pittsburgh and at Indiana University of Pennsylvania from the late 1960s to the early 2010s.

Accompanied by school Director Kevin Sprong and before a crowd that included many of the other 120 co-op coordinators from around the state, Stein was presented with not the usual plaque but a larger than expected wooden model of a bridge to represent the key role co-op programs play in connecting the worlds of school and work.

The award was well-deserved, according to Crawford Tech Assistant Director Mike Costa.

"She's a great resource. We have other schools that'll contact her if they're starting a co-op program or having a transition or somebody new coming in," Costa said. "She just works so hard all the time. I can't imagine anybody more deserving than her."

Stein's colleague Cutshall-Craft submitted the nomination letter that helped secure the award. In it, Cutshall-Craft touted the impressive resume of achievements Stein has compiled since entering her position in 2014-15. The letter helped Stein rise to the top among a field of eight nominees from all over the state.

Much of Stein's efforts involve the day-to-day work of initiating and maintaining relationships with the dozens of employers who hire co-op students, and she also teaches weekly classes on soft skills for the diversified occupations students and similar classes every two weeks for the capstone students.

But Stein's responsibilities involve larger concerns as well: She launched Crawford Tech's annual Signing Day event for seniors who have been hired by local employers — a celebration that has grown from 30 students in 2019 to 85 last spring.



MIKE CROWLEY/Meadville Tribune

Crawford Tech cooperative education coordinators Bonnie Stein and Tina Cutshall-Craft check out the new hallway display celebrating Stein after she received the Pennsylvania Cooperative Education Association's Don Gamble Award for 2025-26 as the state's co-op coordinator of the year.

In recent years Stein has also played a key role in steering two Crawford County efforts to retain workers in the community: the Construction Industry Workforce Program and the Local Industry Fundamental Training program.

But for Cutshall-Craft, what really makes Stein good at what she does is her commitment to communication.

"She's always upfront and gets to the bottom of what needs to be said," Cutshall-Craft said. "The communication that she has not only with the students but with the community and the employers. She's great at bringing them all together at the same table."

While the bridge award will soon have Stein's name on it, she saw it as an award recognizing the entire staff at the school, not just her.

"I wouldn't have the students to go out on co-op if I didn't have the staff instructing them and doing such an amazing job," Stein said. "They do such an amazing job that when our kids go out, we do not have a lot of problems to solve."

The best proof of the school's effectiveness, Stein continued, is evident in the

visits she makes to job sites where co-op students are hard at work — visits that are required every 30 days.

"These kids come out and



Contributed photo

Stein and Director Kevin Sprong pose with the Don Gamble Award at the Pennsylvania Cooperative Education Association conference in State College earlier this month.

they're ready to work," she said. "They're excited about learning. They want to be out working."

Stein's career in education,

which began nearly 25 years ago, came after 17 years as a hairdresser in Meadville. She has been at Crawford Tech since 2002 and first led the cosmetology program before moving to her current position.

It's a job that's easy to love, according to Stein.

"When you walk in and see a student working and they're so excited to show you what they're doing, it is the greatest feeling," she said. "When you're in the grocery or you're out in the community and someone stops and

says, 'Hey, Mrs. Stein' ... and they'll say, 'I'm still working at such-and-such or I just bought my first house.'

"That," Stein continued "is pretty much the topping — it's such a great feeling to know they are in our community, working and contributing and possibly their children coming back here to Tech. It's a great feeling."

Mike Crowley can be reached at (814) 724-6370 or by email at mcrowley@meadvilletribune.com.