NAPOLEON AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS TEACHER WINS 2026 HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS PRIZE FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

Brian Schneider and Napoleon High School Share $75,000 Prize

NAPOLEON, North Dakota — Brian Schneider, a high school agricultural mechanics teacher from Napoleon, has been named a winner of the 2026 Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence, winning $25,000 for himself and $50,000 for his school's program.

Schneider, who teaches at Napoleon High School, is one of 25 public high school skilled trades teachers across the United States who were surprised with the news that they had won. A total of $2 million in cash prizes were awarded today.

"Forty years later, I still love what I do and love sharing my knowledge with my students," **Schneider said**. "I believe my program would stack up well against any skills program in the nation."

The Harbor Freight Tools for Schools Prize for Teaching Excellence started in 2017 by Eric Smidt, owner and founder of Harbor Freight Tools.

"When we started the prize a decade ago, our goal was to recognize and celebrate the best skilled trades teachers and programs across America," **Smidt said**. "Today, we have a nation-wide shortage of skilled trades workers and the need for high school classes to prepare students for that work has never been higher. That's why we're excited to increase the prize to bring attention to these inspiring teachers and invest even more in their important work."

The prize recognizes excellent high school skilled trades teachers, a group of educators who are frequently overlooked and underappreciated. More than $12 million has been awarded to 208 teachers and their programs in the last decade consistent with the mission of Harbor Freight Tools for Schools – to increase understanding, support and investment in skilled trades education in U.S. public high schools.

Educators across the country honored today teach a variety of skilled trades, including construction, carpentry, electrical, welding, automotive, agricultural mechanics, advanced manufacturing, and industrial technology.

In honoring Schneider with a prize, Harbor Freight Tools for Schools cited the program's strong partnerships with local businesses, which provide students with materials, technical expertise and work placements, as well as a completion rate above 90% and a track record of graduates entering skilled trades or starting local businesses. The organization also highlighted a community project in which students designed and built insulated animal shelters from repurposed chemical totes for Furry Friends Rockin' Rescue.

More than 550 teachers applied from 49 states and Harbor Freight Tools for Schools selected 25 winners from 18 states: California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota,

Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin, Washington, and Vermont.

The application process included three rounds of judging, each by an independent panel of experts from the industries of education, industry, nonprofits, and philanthropy.

As artificial intelligence raises new questions about the future of work, Harbor Freight Tools for Schools earlier this year released findings from a new national poll it commissioned showing overwhelming support for expanding skilled trades classes in U.S. public high schools. The poll was conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago.

The total amount awarded in 2026 increased from $1.5 million to $2 million to mark the 10th anniversary of the prize with five grand prize winners winning $100,000 each ($70,000 for their school's skilled trades program and $30,000 for the teacher) and 20 prize winners netting $75,000 each ($50,000 for their school's skilled trades program and $25,000 for the teacher). In some cases, due to school, district or state policy, the schools' skilled trades programs will receive the entire prize winnings. A full list of winners is here.

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About Harbor Freight Tools for Schools

Harbor Freight Tools for Schools is a program of The Smidt Foundation, established by Harbor Freight Tools owner and founder Eric Smidt, to advance excellent skilled trades education in U.S. public high schools. With a deep respect for the dignity of these fields and for the intelligence and creativity of people who work with their hands, Harbor Freight Tools for Schools aims to drive a greater understanding of and investment in skilled trades education, believing that access to quality skilled trades education gives high school students pathways to graduation, opportunity, good jobs and a workforce our country needs. Harbor Freight Tools is a major supporter of the Harbor Freight Tools for Schools program. For more information, visit: *HFTforschools.org*

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