

AWS DETROIT SECTION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM Is 50 Years Strong and Still Going

1982



1983



1988



Can you remember what was going on back in 1974? Maybe you were in elementary school or, perhaps, not yet born. After all, we are talking about 50 years ago. Some history was being made back then, and to set the stage for a look at both the present and the future, it might help to take a small step back to the past.

The world's population was roughly 3.9 billion in 1974; we are over eight billion now. The year also saw plenty of firsts. The 55 MPH speed limit came to be. The life-saving Heimlich maneuver was published for the first time, and President Nixon resigned after Watergate. That year, the AWS Detroit Section awarded its first welding scholarship.

A part of the metro Detroit region since 1925, the AWS Detroit Section has grown to be a strong voice within the welding community. That growth has only been possible because of the seemingly never-ending efforts of our volunteers. With AWS's stated mission to advance the science, technology, and application of welding, a scholarship program seemed like a great way to encourage folks to participate in this important industry.

The Beginning of a Legacy

The Section took its education responsibility one giant step forward by establishing one of AWS's first scholarship programs in 1974. Early proponents of establishing a program included Jim Mitchell (Ford Motor Co.), Robert Wilcox (The Lincoln Electric Co.), and Amos Winsand (Dollar Electric).

The initial incarnation of the Section's scholarship program only involved welding curriculums with an associate degree. The first annual budget? A total of \$2000. The program slowly grew to include 2+2 four-year degrees at Wayne State University and Ferris State University.

As the Section's scholarship program expanded, the dedicated volunteers continued their excellent work, fundraising and raising awareness. Past scholarship chairs included Dick Molica, Tom Sparschu, Glen Knight, James Dolfi, and myself.

It should be noted that all eventually became chairs of the AWS Detroit Section.

The late 1990s saw the Section awarding up to \$20,000 per year. By the late 2000s, total awards were over \$30,000 per year.

Honoring Our Past

With a firm grasp of our history, the AWS Detroit Section honored our scholarship founders by creating named awards for them. The Robert L. Wilcox Scholarship and The James W. Mitchell Scholarship were established in 1981. The Section also established District-level awards to honor other significant contributors to our educational endeavors, such as the Fred Ellicott Scholarship for arc welding and the Dietrich Roth Scholarship for resistance welding.

The Detroit Section also proudly has the AWS Foundation's first scholarship endowed by an individual. The Amos and Marilyn Winsand Scholarship started in 2001 and has grown to become the most prestigious award the Detroit Section offers. This tradition of giving back has been enhanced with the establishment of other individually endowed scholarships.

1990



SOCIETY NEWS

2006



2015



2019



2023



The Detroit Brazing & Soldering Section also contributed to the establishment of the Robert A. Peaslee Scholarship through the AWS Foundation. The scholarship was established in 2004 through contributions from the AWS Detroit Brazing & Soldering Section and the Robert Peaslee family. Thanks to assistance from numerous other companies and individuals, the AWS Foundation can now make two substantial scholarships available annually.

Collaboration with AWS Foundation

In 2012, AWS Detroit partnered with the AWS Foundation and made a real difference in the Society's ability to help. We did this with the establishment of our general Section scholarship endowment. The initial donation was for \$350,000. This has since increased significantly so that we can also award Vocational Education Grants to help hard-working welding educators procure the essentials needed for their programs that a traditional scholarship does not permit. As a result of all this hard work by the dedicated volunteers of the Detroit Section, our annual educational awards and grants now exceed \$90,000.

Congratulations to Jim, Robert, Amos, and the many other AWS Detroit Section volunteers who have been part of the scholarship program over the years. Who knew what was started 50 years ago would have such a long and lasting legacy?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the AWS Detroit Section Scholarship Program. We will celebrate this milestone and honor all our 2024–2025 awardees during our annual Student Night this September. See our website (awssection.com/detroit) for details of this momentous event.

If you are interested in supporting the Section's Scholarship Program, including financial contributions, please reach out to the following:

AWS Detroit Section
ATTN: Scholarship Program
P.O. Box 530305
Livonia, MI 48153

My thanks to the many members of the AWS Detroit Section who contributed their time and efforts to provide information for this article. They drew from old records and their memories. It was a joy to speak with every one of them. **WJ**

Written by **DONALD F. MAATZ JR.** (dmaat@reautomated.com). Maatz is with R&E Automated Systems and serves in the capacity of laboratory manager. He is the past chair of the AWS Detroit Section, a member of the D8 and D8.9 Automotive Welding Committees, the chair of the D8D Subcommittee, an advisor to the C1 Resistance Welding Committee, and an AWS-endorsed CWI and instructor for the RWMA School.