

# Attract. Educate. Support.

JEFF COOK, AFS PRESIDENT

**G**reetings fellow metalcasters. Much has been said and many questions have been asked regarding ways to support the future of this great industry with regard to personnel. As this year's president, please allow me to enlighten you on a few things AFS is doing to address this common concern.

Attract. Educate. Support. These three steps must be given equal attention in order for any of the three to work. Attracting young people to the metalcasting industry is not as difficult as one might think. What attracted you to the industry? For me, part of it stemmed from my father bringing me to a facility to collect his paycheck when I was 4 years old. He left me in a breakroom that overlooked the melt deck. I still remember the smell of the smoke and the heat through the glass.

Many young people might see that same experience quite differently. Heat, smoke and organized chaos are often seen as negatives to those seeing it for the first time and looking to select what they plan to do with their lives after high school. Attracting, therefore, needs to be considered differently today than it was in 1971. Young, impressionable minds remember their first experience with the industry just as we all did. A tour through a clean, safe, well-lit, well-organized metalcasting facility or perhaps an informative Foundry in a Box demonstration is our best advertisement. Robots are great but unnecessary to make a positive impression. Clean floors and clear air should be the first, and cheapest, step.

Education options abound for young people who have decided to

seek a higher education in metalcasting-related fields. American colleges are the best in the world at educating students on metalcasting subjects. Yet, for today's generation, that's not enough. Networking is a very important part of that experience. Thirty-five student chapters exist at universities and community colleges across North America. AFS has named co-liaisons Shelly Dutler, AFS Institute director of education, and Katie Matticks, AFS IT project manager, to help these groups interact and learn from one another. Casting competitions are sprouting up all over the country putting interested, talented students in front of industry professionals looking to hire.

Supporting those students after graduation is the final step to bring new talent into our industry. The Future Leaders in Metalcasting (FLM) continues to grow and offers networking opportunities to those entering the industry. They meet a few times per year to tour facilities

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and listen to presentations on timely topics. AFS also has created co-liaisons for this group. Cathy Potts, AFS director of human resources and administrative services, and Holly Steuerwald, AFS magazines and marketing assistant, will work



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with FLM leadership to continue moving the effort forward.

The Women in Metalcasting group usually meets at major industry events and brings together women interested in networking with others that share the same unique challenges and opportunities. AFS has named Matticks

liaison to that group.

Contrary to popular opinion, understanding the new generation is not impossible. It may very well be uncomfortable at times (guilty), but, in general, they want what we wanted when we were that age: a challenge, an opportunity to make a difference and friends. AFS is bringing various groups together that have heretofore operated independently. The net result will be a self-sustaining machine churning

out interested, talented individuals that will change the industry and the world for the better.

Thank you for all you do for the industry. I wish for you all a very happy holiday season and a prosperous 2017. **MC**