



**Wharton County
Junior College**

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NEWS RELEASE

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WELDING INSTRUCTOR BUILDS CHARACTER WHILE TEACHING SKILLS

Wharton County Junior College Welding Instructor Aaron Dittmar has always loved working with metal. He just never saw himself teaching others how to do it.

“I’m not big on being in the spotlight,” the Wharton native explains.

With his reserved nature and strong work ethic, Dittmar could easily have found fulfillment honing his craft for a manufacturing company or a machine shop. In fact, after graduating from Wharton High School in 2002, he put his skills to the test for several area businesses, working primarily as a fabrication and maintenance welder.

But about six years later, Dittmar’s life took an unexpected turn. On the quest for more education, he earned an associate’s degree and then a certificate in welding technology from WCJC. At the time, he had no idea he was opening the door on a new career.

“I was asked to come back and teach,” he said.

In the fall of 2008, Dittmar began as a part-time welding instructor. He would later move to full-time. And this past year, he accepted the job of Program Director for Welding Technology.

That’s quite a resume for a man who never saw himself as a teacher. The way Dittmar sees it, his journey was a case of divine intervention.

“God has graced me with the ability and talent to show these guys how to do this the right way,” he said.

Doing things “right” is at the heart of Dittmar’s instruction. A certified welder in various techniques and skills, Dittmar has the expertise to train his students in Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW), Gas Metal Arc Welding (GMAW), Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW) and Flux Core Arc Welding (FCAW). The welding program itself is designed to provide a solid foundation for anyone wanting to better their skills and obtain a job in construction, manufacturing or fabrication. Those completing the program receive a certificate in welding technology.

Most will find employment in pipe and plate welding jobs, Dittmar said. The average starting salary is between \$35,000 and \$46,000.

“My goal pretty much is to get these guys functional,” Dittmar said. “We have a one year slot to work in.”

But Dittmar doesn’t stop with just teaching his students welding skills. He has a “higher” goal, too, one that’s based on developing students’ character and sense of responsibility. Dittmar believes there’s a changing work ethic among many young people these days – and it’s not for the better.

He hopes his short time with his students can help make a positive difference.

“Just being able to talk to my students about life is one of my favorite aspects of this job,” he said. “It’s more of an integrity thing with me – to function in life the right way. I try to teach them how to follow through on their work.”

Welding student Brandon Gusman appreciates Dittmar’s efforts. The Wharton resident has been part of the welding program for roughly eight weeks and has already seen a change in his own life.

“Good technique is taught here and I really enjoy these classes,” Gusman said. “This is going to be a good career.”

Dittmar said his students come from all over, both inside Wharton County and far beyond its borders.

“There are not a whole lot of students from around town,” he said. “It’s pretty spread out.”

And that’s just fine by him. Having the chance to teach students from other areas means crossing paths with people Dittmar would likely never have met otherwise. And it provides the opportunity to have a positive impact on so many more lives.

“Being able to help people find a bigger purpose in their lives – that’s what I believe I’m here for,” he said.

For more information on the WCJC Welding Technology program, visit the college’s website at: www.wcjc.edu