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## **Workforce Southwest Washington Announces Clark County Recipients of Excellence in Workforce Development Awards**

**Vancouver, Wash. (Dec. 18, 2017)** – Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW) presented its Excellence in Workforce Development Awards to three Clark County organizations at its recent board meeting.

Awards were given in two categories: Innovation in Workforce Development and Excellence in Building Workforce Partnerships.

Two firms – LSW Architects and Silicon Forest Electronics – received the Innovation in Workforce Development Award for their strong engagement in the community and creation of opportunities for jobs and career pathway exploration.

- **LSW Architects** developed Design Co-Mission in 2014 to build a future workforce of design thinkers and provide students with meaningful design opportunities. The semester-long internship exposes high school students to the internal workings of the architecture firm and empowers them to pursue careers in design fields. As a team, interns choose real-world projects, collaborate side-by-side with professionals, and develop skills in planning, design and presentation.

The program has a two-step approach. Interns are led through a process of self-discovery, helping them to gain clarity about who they are as individuals and better define what they love to do. The second step equips students with technical skills by teaching universal design tools, such as diagramming, basics of drafting and visual communication, and digital 3D model design. The combination of self-empowerment and technical understanding creates a foundation for students to plot their future careers.

By inspiring creative passion, developing technical skills, and creating opportunities for students to participate in and shape real-world projects, LSW Architects creates innovative workforce opportunities for Clark County's youth.

- For nearly two decades, **Silicon Forest Electronics (SFE)** has provided internships and work-based learning opportunities for Pacific NW youth. SFE's commitment to community leadership and development of a regional manufacturing workforce pathway is demonstrated by founder and CEO Frank Nichols, who has established a culture that encourages staff to invest time and resources in proactive and intentional community partnerships.

This past year, SFE created the first manufacturing internship through the Gateway to College program, which led to full-time employment and skills training for a young adult. Through its

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membership in the Multiple Engineering Cooperative (MECOP) program, SFE regularly hires college interns for six-month assignments.

SFE staff has visited middle schools, high schools and community events, such as Manufacturing Day, to share "what's cool" in Advanced Manufacturing and has partnered with Educational Service District 112, WorkSource, Clark College, WSU Vancouver, CREDC, Workforce Southwest Washington, Partners and Careers and others.

Nichols and SFE EVP/General Manager Jay Schmidt serve as advisory board co-chairs with the Center of Excellence for Aerospace & Advanced Manufacturing – an organization that stimulates workforce development and improvements in hiring skilled labor in Washington State.

SFE's support of and involvement in workforce development programs ensures long-term and sustainable talent development for our region.

- **The Southwest Washington Contractors Association (SWCA)** received the Excellence in Building Workforce Partnerships Award for its efforts to help close the workforce gap in the construction industry that is a barrier to local economic development.

SWCA's efforts include: supporting the Nutter Foundation's Dozer Days to educate children about building sustainable communities, industry opportunities and public safety; collaborating with ESD 112's Connect 2 Careers program for youth ages 16 to 24; providing scholarships for local students seeking higher education related to the construction industry; and working in tandem with the Building Industry Association to promote and implement the regional construction workforce development plan.

SWCA demonstrates leadership in building partnerships by collaborating with diverse groups. Some of its other partnerships include Clark College, WorkSource, Cascadia Technical Academy, Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative, Northwest College of Construction, West Coast Training, Workforce Southwest Washington and the Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce.

SWCA promotes collaboration and cooperation between businesses and various organizations, understanding that building a stronger community helps everyone.

"Business engagement in creating and implementing workforce development programs is critical for the growth and sustainability of our region," said Workforce Southwest Washington CEO Jeanne Bennett.

"The award recipients have demonstrated strong commitment to exposing our youth to local job and career opportunities, improving the skills of our workforce to enable companies to hire local skilled talent and providing job opportunities for residents," continued Bennett.

Nominations of businesses in Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties are due by January 12, 2018. Awards will be presented at WSW's March 2018 board meeting in Cowlitz County.



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To review and download the Awards Guidelines and Nomination Form, go to [www.workforcesw.org](http://www.workforcesw.org) and click the link in the “news” section in the bottom right corner of the home page.

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**Workforce Southwest Washington (WSW)**, a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, contributes to regional economic growth by providing investments and resources to improve the skills and education of the workforce in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. WSW-funded programs operated by WorkSource and community-based organizations help businesses find and hire the employees they need and provide people with the skills, education and training to find work or advance in their careers. WSW collaborates with employers, community colleges and universities, labor groups, government and economic development agencies, high schools, nonprofits and community organizations. Learn more at [www.workforcesw.org](http://www.workforcesw.org).

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