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STEAM Comes to Central Tech

By now, we all know that STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics. With Governor Andrew Cuomo's January 6, 2020 announcement – that Syracuse will be the site of New York State's first regional high school and worker training center, focusing on science, technology, engineering, ARTS, and mathematics – a new acronym, STEAM, was born.

The observation made by King + King Architects Director, Jim King, is that STEAM describes an environment that utilizes “strategies that engage all minds,” the actual definition of the new school's goals.

The planned location of the new STEAM high school is the old Central Tech High School, which opened in 1903 and hasn't housed a school since 1975. Approximately 40% of attendees of this new regional STEAM high school will be students coming from suburban school districts. A new state-funded worker training and apprenticeship center, administered by SUNY Empire State College, is also part of the plan for the STEAM location. The Governor's vision is to use this new facility to prepare high school graduates and workers of any age with skills for in-demand, advanced technology jobs through apprenticeships and business partnerships in Central New York.

As Director of Apprenticeship for MACNY, I anticipate the reemergence of apprenticeship, the rigorous, well-respected, “gold standard of training,” that has kept it alive since the Middle Ages, in CNY. The type of work we do in advanced manufacturing, the skills needed, and the tools used to do the work may have changed, but the training method lives on. The combination of on-the-job training and related technical instruction still well prepares a journeyman to do their job today. More importantly, it provides them with a foundation upon which to continue to learn.

Many of CNY's skilled workers recall completing their apprenticeship training at the old Central Tech facility. This place holds fond memories of long evenings after work spent honing machining skills with fellow apprentices. I often hear stories of the camaraderie that flourished between apprentices and the teachers that helped them to build skill sets that provided them with long, successful careers in manufacturing.

With the exciting future of the old Central Tech High School on our minds, we pause to remember with fondness, Fred Gonroff, one of the old Central Tech instructors with an enormous reputation for excellence in training, who recently passed away at the age of 97.



I appreciate the anecdotal memories shared by former Central Tech apprentices, and I was fortunate to know Fred myself through shared experiences in Adult Education training at OCM BOCES. I'm confident that Fred's thorough, hands-on knowledge of manufacturing and machining, along with his gift for working with adult students and teachers, greatly contributed to our local economy. Large and small companies reaped major benefits, through the improvement of skills for the employed and unemployed in Onondaga County and the surrounding Central New York Region.

Fred's contribution to the success of these industries and their workers is described by Paula Hayes, who worked alongside Fred for many years at OCM BOCES. Paula shared that “Fred taught me more than the skills that I needed to deliver educational programs to our manufacturing partners. Fred was a wonderful, smart, and witty colleague and friend. He taught me to laugh more, live more, and have more patience. He loved manufacturing, respected all of his adult students and our instructors, and always led by example. He was one of a kind and will be missed by all.”

I am optimistic that others, with Fred's love of manufacturing and pride in the skilled trades, will emerge to help our local companies support the burgeoning apprenticeship programs and the regional efforts to build a new training center in Central Tech's footprint. We extend our sincerest condolences to the Gonroff family.