

Lee Hosts Texas High School Welding Series

Nearly 500 Students Participate in Competition at McNair Center



Ty Gomez recalls his first experience with a welding machine. He was a 14-year-old middle school student in woodshop class. For him, it was love at first spark, and at that moment, Gomez knew what he wanted to do for a career.

"Welding takes time and practice, and I have been putting the time and effort into my welding — every day in class, after school, and on the weekends," the Cypress Park High School senior shared.

That practice and passion paid off for Gomez, who earned first place in underwater welding and won a \$1,500 tuition scholarship during the [Texas High School Welding](#)

[Series](#) (TXHSWS) on Sept. 28 at the Lee College McNair Center. The competition and certification event is part of the [Texas Rice Festival](#), and this year, nearly 500 students from 32 high schools across Texas and Louisiana showed up with jackets, helmets and gloves ready to torch cut and fuse metal for judges, who are certified welding inspectors.

The level of competitors ranges from freshman (level 1) to seniors (level 4). Students must follow certain weld procedures that align with industry standards to receive an industry based certification. Once a student receives a certification, they are eligible for first, second or third place, along with monetary prizes — which this year came from Coastal Welding Supply and All Tex Welding Supply.

Since the 1990s, the welding contest has taken place at Lamar Institute of Technology in Beaumont until organizers needed additional space and decided to move it to the McNair Center in Baytown this year.

"The Lee College facilities are set up in a way that allows us to run a contest of this size," said Dusty Green, welding contest chair, adjunct instructor at Lee College and faculty at Goose Creek CISD Stuart Career Tech High School. "It made sense to move it over to the McNair Center."



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TXHSWS was established to help students develop the technical and employability skills necessary for the modern welding industry. The contest challenges students of all levels to improve their abilities and increase their desire to pursue a career in welding.

"Students earning industry recognized certifications are essential to growing our skilled workforce and support of local industry," said John Elliott, industrial studies division chair at Lee College. "We hope that by participating in this event, these young people will have connected with long-term training opportunities at Lee College as they grow their skill sets to enter high-paying positions in welding and allied professions."

According to the [United States Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the demand for welders, cutters, solderers and brazers is rising at a steady rate of 8 percent, which translates to more than 34,000 new jobs over the next decade. Texas and the greater Houston area have the highest concentration of manufacturing and industries that require welding.

Gomez, who will graduate from high school in May, is excited about his future as a welder.

"Welding is fun, but the thing I enjoy the most is the brotherhood and team bonding that I've built among my teammates," he added.

Other competition winners include Rogelio Carrizales from Stuart Career Tech, who won first place in the cutting contest and a \$1,500 scholarship; Camdon Maddox from Burkeville ISD and Diego Martinez from Royal ISD. Judges gave out Welder Performance Qualification (WPQ) test certifications to more than 70 students. See the [complete list of winners and certifications](#).