



**NEWS RELEASE**  
**August 6, 2025, Olympia WA**

**WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION FOR CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**  
**2025 EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS**

The Washington Association for Career and Technical Education (WA-ACTE) is pleased to announce the recipients of the Washington ACTE 2025 Excellence Awards. The award winners were announced during the Washington ACTE Summer Conference, which was held August 3-6, 2025, at The Davenport Grand Hotel in Spokane, Washington. The Washington ACTE Awards promote merit in Career and Technical Education (CTE) by recognizing individuals who have made extraordinary contributions to CTE. Award winners serve as inspirational leaders to Washington ACTE: they embody the core values of serving students and being committed to CTE. Congratulations to all of our 2025 Excellence Award winners!

**Teacher of the Year**



**Melissa Mayer**  
**Pullman School District**

The **Washington ACTE Teacher of the Year Award** recognizes the finest Career and Technical Education teachers at the middle/secondary school level who have demonstrated innovation in the classroom, commitment to their students, and dedication to the improvement of CTE in their institutions and communities.

**Melissa Mayer** has been a CTE educator for the past 14 years and truly works to embody ACTE's mission to provide educational leadership in developing a competitive workforce in her classroom and in the world around her every day. Melissa's teaching career started in Kooskia, Idaho, teaching at Clearwater Valley Junior-Senior High School from 2011-2016. Kooskia is a rural community located on the Nez Perce reservation. She taught a variety of classes to 7th-12th graders in this school including web design, computer applications, economics as well as being the BPA advisor. Starting her educational career in a community like Kooskia helped her see how CTE can help students reach new heights even when they are 80 miles away from the nearest Starbucks. In the fall of 2016, Melissa began teaching at Pullman High School (PHS). Pullman being home to Washington State University (go Cougs!) opens up a world of possibilities for students. It is great to be in a community that supports education at all levels and fosters learning at every turn. She serves as the current secretary for both WE-BAM and area 11 DECA. She is a part of her district's guiding coalition for their Professional Learning Community (PLC). Along with those duties, she is the DECA and yearbook advisor at PHS. On a personal note, Melissa has 2 children, and her youngest, who's currently a junior at PHS, wants to become a CTE teacher. Her oldest child who graduated from PHS last year has found a viable career path and passions through CTE as well. The culinary arts pathway at their high school allowed her older child to get the ServSafe certification before graduating and is currently working as a prep cook. She also have a 2-year-old pug named Tiny Tim. Her husband, Kip, and family have always supported her journey in and out of the classroom with the joys and struggles of being a very busy CTE business/marketing teacher.

**New Teacher of the Year**



**Jessica Elshire**  
**Clover Park School District**

The **Washington ACTE New Teacher of the Year Award** recognizes new CTE teachers who have made significant contributions toward innovative and unique Career and Technical Education programs and shown a professional commitment early in their careers.

**Jessica Elshire** graduated from Central Washington University in 2020 during the pandemic. She was a long-term substitute at Bethel High School for 6 months then got her first teaching position at Kentridge High School. During her time at Kentridge, she taught food and fitness and creative cooking. She then transitioned to Lakes High School in the Clover Park School District where she currently resides. She jumped right in with this new position teaching educational leadership and early childhood education. This year she is teaching culinary 2, educational leadership, and nutrition and wellness. In 2022 she shared interest in joining the Washington Family and Consumer Science Educator board as one of the newsletter co-chairs. She has had a fun time creating newsletters highlighting information shared from teachers highlighting their programs in their districts across the state. For the next school year Jessica is already working on Lancer Academy and freshman orientation.

#### Administrator of the Year



**Laura Jones**  
**Pasco School District**

The **Washington ACTE Administrator of the Year Award** recognizes administrative CTE professionals at the school, district, county, or state level who have demonstrated leadership in ensuring teacher and student success and have made significant contributions toward innovative, unique, and effective Career and Technical Education programs.

**Laura Jones** serves as the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Director for the Pasco School District. Her career in CTE began in 1996 when she joined Pasco High School as a marketing teacher and DECA advisor. Leaving the private sector to fulfill her lifelong dream of becoming a teacher, Jones brought her industry experience into the classroom, where she taught marketing and business concepts while fostering leadership and employability skills among her students. She developed authentic projects that connected students with industry and community organizations, creating meaningful, real-world learning experiences. In addition to her teaching role, Jones took on leadership positions spearheading numerous district initiatives and projects. Her impactful work earned her recognition as the 2008 Washington State Teacher of the Year, a distinction that enabled her to elevate the importance of CTE. Jones is passionate about CTE and student leadership, having witnessed these programs' transformative impact on students' lives. As CTE Director, she values collaborating with business partners and colleagues to expand CTE opportunities and design innovative student experiences. Jones has also worked closely with college partners and educators to expand high school courses and career pathways. For instance, she collaborated with Washington State University (WSU) Tri-Cities to create the Teaching Bridge program within the district's Teaching Academy. This program allows students to work as paraeducators while completing their coursework at WSU, providing valuable real-world experience and income to support their education. As director, Jones works to remove barriers and ensure teachers feel supported to do their best work preparing students for their future. This support happens through mentoring new teachers and advisors, offering professional development, and navigating Career and Technical Student Organizations. In 2024, Jones received the Washington Family and Consumer Science Administrator of the Year award and was honored to be recognized by the Family and Consumer Science Teachers she supports. Jones envisions a future where all students can take advantage of the diverse career pathways available at Pasco School District's four—soon to be six—high schools. She aims to ensure that every student graduates with a viable plan for their future.

#### Counseling and Career Development Professional Award



**Debbie Smith**  
**Battle Ground School District**

The **Washington ACTE Counseling and Career Development Professional Award** recognizes school counselors and career development professionals who have demonstrated commitment to connecting students with opportunities for success, shown innovation in career exploration and development, and have advocated for CTE as a viable option for all students.

**Debbie Smith** has been a Work-Based Learning Coordinator for Battle Ground School District for 10 years. Currently working with 300 WBL Students and Community Businesses. Helping develop meaningful learning objectives for individual students. Transitional site Learning Coordinator for Evergreen School District for 5 years. Worked with Businesses in the local community to develop work site opportunities for students with special needs, adjusting their individual IEPs to meet the standards and expectations of the business. Special Education Para - Evergreen School District for 17 years. Spent the majority of her time working with students, staff, local businesses, and families to help create center-based plans to help individuals thrive within their communities. Vancouver Parks and Recreation Supervisor - Access to Recreation for 17 years. Supervised 10-15 staff each summer for 17 years. Creating, organizing and implementing recreation opportunities for individuals with special needs within their community. Teaching public transportation, attending community events, such as music festivals, county fairs, swimming, gardening, cooking, visiting local libraries, and farmer markets.

The **Washington ACTE Impact Awards** recognize individuals and groups from the education, business and industry communities who enhance Career and Technical Education (CTE) by contributing to the improvement, promotion, development, and progress of Career and Technical Education.

**Champion for CTE Award**



**Tom Diehl**

**Business-Education Partnership Award**



The **Champion for CTE Award** is given to individuals who have made a significant impact on the improvement and expansion of CTE programs and/or on positively influencing policymakers and public opinion regarding CTE. These individuals have also repeatedly demonstrated their public support for CTE and who exhibit an understanding of the components of modern, high-quality CTE.

The **Business-Education Partnership Award** is given to partnerships that are designed to support high-quality CTE programs. These partnerships make a measurable and significant impact on student achievement and on the development of the local community and economy.

**Tom Diehl** is the retiring NW Regional Manager at Klein Educational Systems. Helping educate the NW with engineering and technical skills! He left teaching in 1987 and still has a heart for education. Since 1987, he has been working with Engineering and Career and Technology Education Programs in the NW to incorporate technology, curriculum, and hardware in teaching the associated skills and objectives to their students with the right balance of theory and hands-on learning. Since starting in '87, he has evolved with the technology from paper and pencil to amazing resources including cloud-based eLearning and blending them together to help instructors to teach to the variety of learning styles. He has also launched many technical products into the educational market including 3D Printers, CNC Machines, Robotics, Laser Engravers, Vinyl Signmakers, and SmartBoards. He has successfully launched his own company "Ideal Technologies" managing it for 8 years before selling it in 2002. His career goal was to continue to learn and grow in his profession along with continuing to build great relationships with educators and manufacturers. Tom has been a true Champion for CTE and has supported WVA and WA-ACTE for nearly four decades!

**Business-Education Partnership Award**



**Meg Lindsay, Providence Sacred Heart Medical Center**

The **Business-Education Partnership Award** is given to partnerships that are designed to support high-quality CTE programs. These partnerships make a measurable and significant impact on student achievement and on the development of the local community and economy.

**Meg Lindsay** serves as the Workforce Development Program Manager at Providence in Spokane, Washington. In this role, she has been instrumental in bridging the gap between CTE and healthcare employment, fostering initiatives that prepare students for real-world careers in the healthcare sector. One of Meg's most notable contributions is her collaboration with Spokane Public Schools to develop the Providence Healthcare Academy in 2023. This innovative program offers high school students paid, hands-on experience in healthcare settings during the school day, enabling them to envision and pursue careers in nursing and other medical fields. The success of this initiative is evident, with several students being hired by Providence upon graduation. Meg's efforts extend beyond program development; she actively engages with local colleges and universities to create education pathways that empower employees and students alike. Her commitment to workforce development is further demonstrated through her participation in community meetings aimed at enhancing educational opportunities and career readiness.

**Washington ACTE President's Award**  
**Jodi Jacobs, WA-ACTE President 2024-2025**



**Larry Galli**

Father of Jodi Jacobs and retired CTE Director for the Everett School District

**Tim Knue, WA-ACTE Executive Director, 2009-2025**

**Staff Thank You**



**Tess Alviso & Franciene Chrisman**  
**Executive Assistants**

**Washington ACTE Membership Award**

(recognizes the Washington ACTE section with the highest percentage increase in membership)



**HSCTE**

**Health Science Career & Technical Educators (HSCTE)**

is this year's recipient with a 3% increase in membership.

**Washington ACTE Achieve 100% Membership Award**

(recognizes schools or districts that have 100% Washington ACTE membership participation from each and every member of their CTE staff)



**The 2025 recipients:**

**Centralia High School**  
**Clover Park School District**  
**Fife School District**  
**Goldendale School District**  
**Lake Stevens School District**  
**OSPI CTE Department**  
**Rochester School District**  
**Stanwood-Camano School District**  
**West Sound Technical Skills Center**

The Washington Association for Career and Technical Education is the state's largest not-for-profit association committed to the advancement of education that prepares youth and adults for successful careers. Washington ACTE represents the community of CTE professionals including educators, administrators, researchers, guidance counselors, and others at all levels of education. Washington ACTE is committed to excellence in providing advocacy, public awareness and access to resources, professional development, and leadership opportunities.

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