



American Welding Society®

DISTRICT 15

Volume 3 / Issue 1

DISTRICT 15 2026 CONFERENCE

June 13, 2026

Timberlake Lodge Hotel

Grand Rapids, MN



*Not Pictured: Nicole Lopes

Front Row L to R

Phil Erdahl, Dale Szabla, Jessica Woods,
Aleasha Hladilek-Falter, Mike Hanson

Second Row L to R

Joshua Heibel, Hayley Larson, Jacob
Bjork, Eugene Stitt, Matt Lazration, Ross
Skattum, Emma Evers

Back Row

Jeffrey Peter

GREETINGS FROM THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Hello District 15 Members,

Just completed the 2026 District 15 Conference that was held in Grand Rapids, MN at the Timberlake Lodge Hotel. The meeting started at 8AM and even with a few minutes of technical difficulty it ended at 1:30PM. It was my second hosted ZOOM call and having used TEAMS more I haven't figured out all the tricks. I appreciate the patience from the group during this trouble. Fourteen people in attendance and four on the ZOOM call made for a great meeting with some good discussions.

Some of the challenges identified during the "Sections" discussion was the low numbers of members that attend the organized events. A fair amount of work goes into planning them and it can be discouraging when the turnout is low. I would ask that you set aside some time to attend these events. Also, if you have suggestions about what the section leadership should be planning let me know and I will pass that information on to the sections or reach out to the section volunteers directly.

The District 15 Scholarship Committee was hard at work this year. So far we have awarded \$30,000 in Welder Training, \$5000 in Welding Competition, \$15,000 in District 15, and \$12,500 in Section Named Scholarships. Thanks to Eugene Stitt, Phil Erdahl, Joel Zigler, Tim Schwanz, Mike Hanson and Ike Oguocha for participating on the committee, the AWS Foundation, all the people that contribute to the scholarships and congratulations to all the winners. There are still opportunities for WT scholarships as we award those monthly until the allocated money is gone. Application is on the AWS.org website.

Excited to learn that Roseau High School has been awarded a grant from the AWS Foundation this year. More to come on that topic.

Attended the NW Section Golf Outing in early June and the Welding Automation Expo & Conference. I recommend both events.

There is a Leadership Summit planned for 8/7 – 8/8/26. The flyer is below. Registration deadline is 6/30/26.



Dale Szabla

Contact

Dale Szabla, District 15

Director

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Updates from National

The Board of Directors has voted to restructure the board. This process will be described in the August Welding Journal in detail so watch for that issue. I mention it because the membership will need to vote on this change. The high points are the existing board makeup is 35 voting members and is being reduced to eleven. One of the main reasons for this is to make the board more efficient. The membership will still have representation at the board level similar to what it is now with the major change being the title from District Director to District Governor. The DG will focus on the local level concerns and the “new” DD will focus on AWS strategy.

Proud to announce that Phil Erdahl from the Northwest Section has accepted the role of the first District 15 District Governor 2028- 2030. My term ends December 2027.

UPCOMING SECTION EVENTS

Northern Plains: Annual Scholarship Fund Raising Golf Event – 8/8/26 Sand Hill River Golf Course, Fertile MN

Northwest: Leadership Summit – August 7 – 8, 2026 at the Chippewa Valley Technical College Eau Claire WI. Registration due by 6/30/26



NORTHERN PLAINS SECTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Golf Outing Scholarship Fundraiser
Saturday August 8, 2026 | 8:00 AM CST
Sandhill River Golf Course, 44203 MN-32, Fertile, MN 56540
RSVP by Monday, August 3, 2026

The AWS Northern Plains Section invites everyone to our **Annual Golf Outing Scholarship Fundraiser** on Saturday, August 8, 2026, at Sandhill Golf Course in Fertile, MN.

Our event features a 4-person team format, so we encourage you to bring a partner then the remaining two spots in your foursome will be assigned at random. Please note that anyone is welcome to participate regardless of AWS membership!

Proceeds from the day will **support scholarship awards** for welding students attending classes within our section, which covers North Dakota and Northwest Minnesota.

We are seeking sponsors! If you're interested in sponsoring door prizes and/or being a hole sponsors, please reach out or learn more below. **Door prizes** could include promotional items from your company, items that you sell or are a vendor for, or money to be put towards door prizes. A **hole sponsor** will get your company name and/or logo on a sign at one of the holes at the golf course.

The cost to sponsor a hole is \$100.00. All hole sponsor donations go directly to the scholarship fund.

We would appreciate any support that you may be able to provide to help our Section's efforts to promote welding education in our communities of Northwestern Minnesota and North Dakota.

If you have any questions or to make a donation, please send an email to northernplains@awssections.org with "Golf" in the subject line or contact any of the other officers or members directly from our section.



APPLICATION DEADLINE EXTENDED



AWS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

The AWS District 15 Executive Committee will select up to 10 emerging leaders to participate in the AWS District 15 Leadership Summit. Top applicants will demonstrate active involvement within their Sections, exhibit exceptional leadership skills, and produce outstanding school and/or community achievements.

The AWS District 15 Leadership Summit is open to students, young members, and new Section Officers, age 18-30, who want to develop the skills to be a member of the next generation of AWS Leaders.

**Participant Takeaways:**

- An understanding of AWS on a local and national level
- Leadership & communication skills
- A new network of future AWS Leaders
- Resources/processes to bring back to your AWS Sections

When: Friday, August 7th – Saturday, August 8th
Where: Chippewa Valley Technical College — Eau Claire, WI
***Participants are responsible for getting to and from the event**
Hotel: Information provided upon selection
Cost: FREE
Deadline to Apply: June 30th
Questions: Email mikhan318@comcast.net



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