

# Navy, Industry Launch Program to Bolster Welders at Critical Nuclear Supplier



By Team Submarine Public Affairs, Oct. 25, 2024

MOUNT VERNON, Ind. – The Navy Submarine Industrial Base (SIB) program announced the grand opening of the John D. Haynes School of Welding Technology at Mount Vernon High School, Oct. 24. The initiative, a collaboration between BWX Technologies (BWXT) and non-profit integrator BlueForge Alliance, seeks to address the critical shortage of skilled workers needed to build the Navy’s next generation of submarines.

The welding school offers students a unique dual-track educational opportunity to complete their high school diploma and a welding certification. Graduates will have direct entry into BWXT’s Nuclear Operations Group, positioning them to work on projects vital to U.S. national defense.

“This program isn’t just about filling jobs—it’s about creating pathways for more people to support a critical national security mission, and to do so while building a vital, family-sustaining career as a highly skilled and valued member of our team,” said Matt Sermon, Executive Director of Program Executive Office Strategic Submarines, in a video message played during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. “The skills learned here are critical to building and maintaining the submarines that will safeguard our shores for generations to come, and the men and women who pass through these doors will be the backbone of our national security efforts.”

Highlighting the broader implications, Sermon added, “As we scale up submarine production, programs like the Haynes School of Welding Technology will ensure we have the skilled

tradespeople needed to meet our goals. This type of focused collaboration between the Navy, industry, and educational institutions is essential in keeping America at the forefront of innovation and defense.”

The state-of-the-art facility, featuring cutting-edge training technologies, can accommodate up to 60 students annually. It’s part of a broader Navy SIB program initiative to strengthen the submarine industrial base, which faces the challenging task of hiring 140,000 skilled workers over the next decade.

Sermon ended his comments highlighting that as submarines continue to play a pivotal role in global security, this high school in Indiana may be shaping the future of America’s undersea capabilities.

The event included remarks from other key figures, such as BWXT CEO Rex Geveden, school officials and welding students, and concluded with tours of the new facility.

Viewed as a potential blueprint for similar programs nationwide, the John D. Haynes School of Welding Technology represents an innovative approach across government, industry, and academia to meet the demand for welders crucial to national defense priorities. Likewise, this model and partnership serves as a benchmark as Navy expands industrial base efforts across the broader maritime enterprise of surface, subsurface, and mission systems.