



Moraine Park Technical College provides an education aimed at developing the full person, according to Mike Staral '78, of West Bend. As Moraine Park's 2013 Distinguished Alumnus, he should know. A 1978 graduate of Moraine Park's Tool and Die Technologies Apprenticeship program, Staral serves as vice president at Willer Tool Corp., in Jackson, Wis. He is also a member of the Moraine Park CNC/Tool and Die Technologies Advisory Committee and in July, will become one of two new members on Moraine Park's District Board.

He's dedicated a large part of his life to spreading the good word about technical education. It's no wonder, then, that 65 percent of Willer Tool Corp.'s 60 employees are Moraine Park graduates. "They receive hands-on experience, learn to deal with others outside the classroom and are well prepared for the job field," said Staral. "Not only does Moraine Park provide employer contacts for graduates – connections that help them land jobs – the College teaches soft skills, including communication, teamwork and problem solving."

Graduates of Moraine Park, according to Staral, are ready for employment in the real world. He knows this from experience. He remembers well the lessons gained as a student. "We learned the big things, like math and machining," said Staral. "One of the main objectives of our teacher, Ken Nelson, was to get graduates jobs."

Thirty-five years later, Staral has helped grow Willer Tool Corp. from the six-person operation he originally joined to one of 60. During his journey to vice president, he's remained committed to his Alma Mater and its graduates. "We have three to six Moraine Park graduates going through the apprenticeship program," said Staral. "They take two years of school, then work with us for 10,400 hours during an apprenticeship." Each apprentice then becomes a journeyman tool and die maker. "The industry is really strong," added Staral. "Right now, I could place 20 graduates in the tool and die field within Washington County."

That's why maintaining an influx of highly trained graduates is critical to the growth of the tool and die industry. As a CNC/Tool and Die Technologies Advisory Committee member, Staral and other industry experts, work with Moraine Park instructors to ensure students learn the industry's most critical skills and use the latest technologies. Similarly, as a Moraine Park District Board Member, Staral works to make decisions regarding the budget, new program implementation, and more. "Manufacturing is big in Wisconsin, so we have to continue investment in programs, machines and tools," he said.

"I'm Moraine Park's biggest fan," admits Staral. Aside from himself, three other members of his family are graduates of Wisconsin technical colleges, including his wife, Kate, with a degree in interior design; his son, Jason, with a tool and die degree; and a daughter-in-law, Krista, with a dental hygiene degree. Staral's other son, Chad, received an accounting degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A committed family man and contributor to his community, Staral also enjoys two grandchildren, Addison and Blake.

A lifelong West Bend resident, Staral is president of Friends of West Bend Parks and serves on the West Bend Baseball Association Board of Directors and the West Bend Park and Recreation Commission.

"Be a team player and have a positive attitude," Staral advises new Moraine Park graduates. "If you do that, people will notice you and you will go places. What made me successful is that I never said 'no' to hard work."