



Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA) 2018 Rural Business Partner Award

Ashley Furniture | [Ashley Furniture Industries of Arcadia](#)



Ashley Furniture Industries was honored by the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WIRSA), a non-profit organization that is dedicated to helping address challenges faced by rural school districts, at the annual Rural Schools Conference on October 29, 2018.

Ashley has partnered with the four schools of the Trempealeau Valley Cooperative (Arcadia, Blair-Taylor, Independence and Whitehall) to collaboratively meet the needs of our region's, state's and nation's future by working with us to expose our teachers to modern global

educational practices, providing modern and high cost equipment, committing to continued logistical support and providing access to travel, research and experiences that are not often afforded to public school districts.

The major public highlight of this collaboration to date is the rolling out of the Mobile Advanced Manufacturing Skills Lab sponsored by Ashley Furniture to begin this school year. This high-tech self-contained lab is focused on worldwide research of best practices and a return to focus on efficient "making". This \$3 million + project has been provided to the schools of the TVC 2.0 to better prepare both students and adults for the future with a range of educational programming.

The ongoing work to change the way our region and perhaps state provides educational opportunities to both its K-12 students and adults may well be the most meaningful work to date. Ron Wanek, Founder and Chairman of the Board of Ashley Furniture Industries, Todd Wanek, President and CEO of Ashley Furniture Industries, and Jim Dotta, Senior Vice President of Caseloads/Engineering, along with many others at Ashley, are deeply engaging in this most valuable work through the Ashley Educational Foundation. In the words of Whitehall District Administrator Mike Beighley, "In my 20+ years as a Wisconsin School Superintendent, I have not seen the depth of discussion that we are seeing in our region today."

Other award winners honored by WIRSA at the Rural Schools Conference were Dan Viste, Southern Door County School District, Rural Support Staff Person of the Year; Steve Pate of Portage, Rural Board of Education Member of the Year; Bryce Bird, District Administrator of the Riverdale School District, Rural Administrator of the Year; Justin Gerlach, teacher in the Mishicot School District, Rural Teacher of the Year; and Heather DuBois Bourenane, Executive Director of WPEN, Rural Advocacy Award.

The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance was formed to help rural school districts address the unique issues that affect rural schools as they seek to achieve the highest quality education for every student. Members include a cross-section of administrators, educators, school board members, post-secondary representatives, rural community members, business leaders, and other concerned individuals who want a strong voice for rural education.