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Finalists Named for Award



Recognizing the Industry's Top Trainers

Finalists named for 2008 award

Effective training continues to play a critical role in the overall safety of crane and rigging operations. Not always an easy task, trainers face many hurdles with issues such as language barriers and illiteracy, "old-timers" with entrenched bad habits, and overworked riggers and operators who don't feel they have the time to sit in a classroom. In recognition of successful trainers, *Crane Hot Line* asked its readers to nominate trainers who are doing

an outstanding job educating others.

Each nomination was accompanied by an essay describing how the individual has had a positive impact on students, the work environment, or the industry. We asked readers to tell us about the innovative training techniques or hands-on instruction the trainer uses; how the trainer encourages peer or corporate accountability; and to demonstrate through quantitative evidence that the training was successful.

Trainers are recognized in two categories: Corporate and Professional. Corporate trainers are those whose primary employer is a construction company, crane rental company, manufacturer, or other industry-related business. Professional trainers are those whose primary employer is a training company.

Thanks to the support of our sponsors, the Top Trainer in each category will receive a \$1,250 scholarship. Scholarships may be used by recipients for train-the-trainer courses or industry conference attendance in order to further their own knowledge or may be awarded in their name to a student of their choice. Our sponsors included AmQuip Corp., Bensalem, Pa.; The Crosby Group, Tulsa, Okla.; Altec, Birmingham, Ala.; Elliott Equipment Co., Omaha, Neb.; and Stephenson Equipment Inc., Harrisburg, Pa.

Based on the submissions received, the *Crane Hot Line* editorial staff selected the following individuals to be recognized for their achievements.

TOP TRAINER – CORPORATE

Ray Feidt, OSHA and Crane Training Manager Stephenson Equipment Inc., Harrisburg, Pa.

Nominated by: Dennis Heller, President and CEO

Founded in 1957, SEI operates seven branches in Pennsylvania and New York with a service operation in Aberdeen, Md. SEI provides sales, rentals, financing, and product support, as well as operator training and safety programs. SEI markets a complete line of cranes, asphalt equipment, and earthmoving machines.

Formerly a crane operator and crane technician for 15 years, Ray Feidt has worked for SEI for 23 years. He was instrumental in the development of the company's training program, which is also an NCCCO certification test site. "Students always compliment his real-time qualifications as he teaches class. He can relate to the customer and the lifting business, which we believe is key to ongoing success," says Dennis Heller, president. Heller emphasizes that Feidt's depth of experience is what makes his natural teaching ability so effective.

SEI strives to provide a total equipment package for its customers, of which training is a key component. "The customer's challenge is finding qualified employees, so as a dealer, we embraced this challenge and began crane operator training before CCO was even an organization," says Heller. In addition to crane operator training, Feidt teaches rigging and signal person training. He also manages and conducts training for SEI's OSHA inspection department, which performs more than 1,000 inspections annually. According to Heller, SEI is the only crane dealer in Pennsylvania providing this level of training. The sole trainer for SEI, Feidt



conducts training courses 20 weeks a year. In 2007, 182 operators took the CCO test at the SEI facility, and this year that number will exceed 200.

Beyond his company, Feidt has provided information to several Pennsylvania state senators regarding crane safety. On October 9, the state passed legislation establishing a seven-member State Board of Crane Operators to oversee licensure and discipline of crane operators. Feidt has petitioned to serve on the board, but at press time appointments had not yet been made.

Above all, Feidt's passion for the crane industry is a defining characteristic. "He is passionate about providing the knowledge, experience, responsibility, and training to provide the safety required for crane operators. He is proud of the crane operator profession and encourages men and women to make careers within the construction industry," says Heller.

TOP TRAINER – PROFESSIONAL

Mike Parnell, President
Devon Beasley, Senior Instructor
Russ Donaldson, Senior Instructor

Industrial Training International Inc., Woodland, Wash.

Nominated by: George Arsenault, rigging training coordinator for Cianbro, Pittsfield, Maine, and Mike Parnell, President of Wire Rope and Rigging Consultants, a division of ITI

Better known as Wire Rope and Rigging Consultants, this division of Industrial Training International has had an innovative and pioneering attitude toward training for more than 20 years. The company's corporate philosophy is that "people have a greatly increased chance of retention by seeing, speaking and doing all at the same time." This means a heavy dose of hands-on activities "to allow participants to skillfully perform safe operating and rigging practices, to conduct effective inspections, and to provide quality maintenance."

Mike Parnell was nominated by customer George Arsenault and, in turn, Parnell nominated two of his lead trainers. For this reason, *Crane Hot Line* decided to recognize Mike Parnell, Devon Beasley, and Russ Donaldson as the team that they are.

Arsenault, a former ironworker and rigger, now serves as rigging trainer coordinator for heavy industrial contractor Cianbro, Pittsfield, Maine. He considers Parnell his mentor. He wrote that he first learned about Parnell in the 1990s after reading an article he had written in an industry trade magazine. He recalled thinking Parnell's approach was "interesting." Then shortly after reading the article, "my employer hired his company to do a four-day master rigging program." Arsenault was unable to attend the class; his co-workers, however, had good reports. "A hands-on sling tension activity with load scales was a real eye-opener," says Arsenault. As time went by, Wire Rope and Rigging Consultants conducted additional training, but for various reasons Arsenault was never able to attend. In 2001, Arsenault was promoted to a rigging training position that exposed him to a variety of rigging

From left: Devon Beasley,
Mike Parnell, and
Russ Donaldson



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vendors and training services. Still, "Mike's programs and products impressed me the most." Finally, schedules coincided. But the day of the class, Parnell had other commitments and had sent other trainers instead.

In 2005 Arsenault attended a national assembly meeting of the Association of Crane & Rigging Professionals, of which Parnell is a founding member and was scheduled to speak. During a presentation on center of gravity, he used an ACCER PC tablet, which allows a person to draw, write, color, erase and project on a screen. "I had never seen a teaching tool like this," says Arsenault. "Next was a discussion of share of the load in relation to center of gravity. A workshop explained the concept step by step. Light bulbs were popping off in my head.

"Mike is always willing to share his knowledge and appropriate resources. He always returns a phone call or email in a timely fashion. I remember spending over one hour on the phone with Mike on a Saturday as he explained one of his famous Rigging Mysteries exercises. I had used the exercise in one of my classes but ended up with egg on my face in front of ironworkers, riggers, and co-workers. I had the correct answer because I had the answer key but had no clue how we got there." That Saturday, Parnell took the time to explain the answer to Arsenault. "Mike's never-ending dedication, passion,

Business Issues

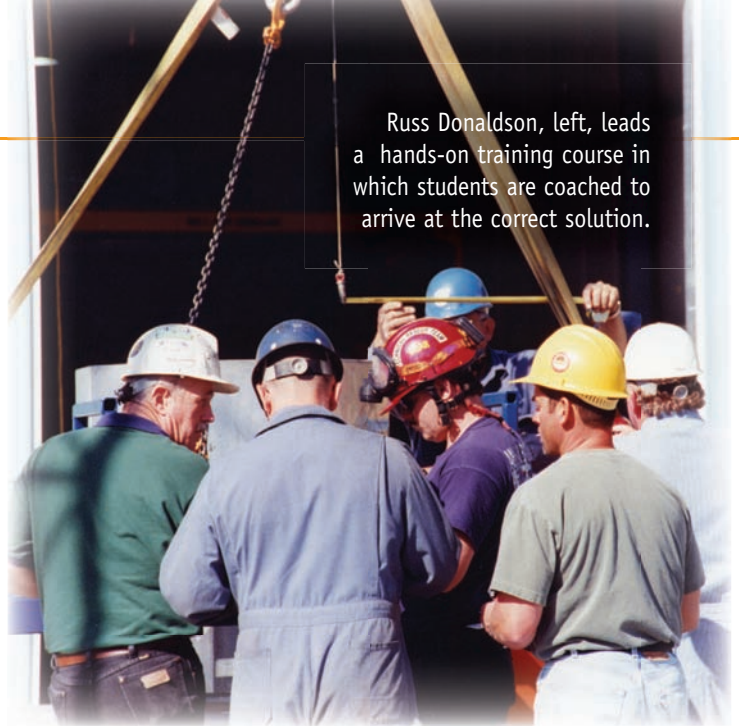
teaching techniques, and ability to teach a complicated topic in the simplest form proves him to be the best instructor and always very interesting.”

Separately, Parnell nominated two of his instructors. Devon Beasley, senior instructor, has been with the company since 1986. Prior to that he taught at the Idaho National Laboratories. He has received ITI’s internal Trainer of the Year award twice.

“I have seen Devon take on dozens of unusual training assignments and finish with style,” says Parnell. “His knowledge base is very broad and humor level high, so students are able to learn in a rich environment from a guy who loves to teach. We often face the challenge that a customer won’t accept any other trainer except Devon after he has been their first provider from ITI. The customer decides they have found a nugget of gold, and no other trainer could possibly equal him. This is a great problem to have!”

Of Russ Donaldson, whom Parnell has known for nearly 20 years, he says, “It has been a pleasure and a life lesson to work with Russ. I have witnessed him in a number of training situations that would challenge even the most seasoned veteran.”

He continues: “Russ’s integrity is beyond reproach, which is



Russ Donaldson, left, leads a hands-on training course in which students are coached to arrive at the correct solution.

a reflection of his Wyoming upbringing. His ‘it’s either right or wrong’ attitude helps maintain a level of correctness when it comes to students adapting to the proper usage methods for cranes and rigging.”

HONORABLE MENTION – CORPORATE



Al Abel, Lifting Specialist Mazzella Lifting Technologies, Cleveland, Ohio

Nominated by: Mike Minissale,
Marketing Coordinator

Mazzella Lifting Technologies is a manufacturer and distributor of a wide range of lifting products for industrial, commercial and specialty applications. Founded in 1954, the company also offers inspection, maintenance, repair, and testing services. Mazzella’s corporate philosophy on training is that “safety doesn’t cost money, it saves and makes money.” All Mazzella trainers have been accredited through Industrial Training International Inc., a leading training and safety consulting company. Every three years the company’s sales and training personnel attend refresher courses given by ITI. (See write-up on ITI, page 17.) Mazzella trainers also receive ongoing product updates and training from manufacturers, such as The Crosby Group and Columbus McKinnon. In Ohio, Mazzella is a safe practices training partner with the state’s Bureau of Workers Compensation.

Al Abel began a second career as a trainer 13 years ago for Mazzella Lifting Technologies after retiring as a high school teacher and athletics director. A friendship with Tony Mazzella, president and

CEO of Mazzella Lifting, was the connection that introduced Abel to the world of lifting equipment. Abel is currently one of a team of about five trainers, but according to Mike Minissale, marketing coordinator, Abel is “the front line guy,” often speaking at safety conferences and industry tradeshow. In addition, he has received safety awards from the Associated Wire Rope Fabricators.

Abel draws on his experience as an athletics director, often using sports talk and props in class. Golf clubs, giant dice, and damaged rigging gear make frequent appearances, especially when he compares using the right sling for the lift to selecting the right golf club or when the topic is taking the risk out of rigging.

“His energetic style works from the boardroom to the field trailer and everything in between,” says Minissale. “He is a firm believer in class participation.” One way he gets students to open up to him: he tosses Life Savers (for its tie to safety) and Payday (because safety saves money) candy in exchange for questions and answers.

After attending one of Abel’s training courses, a steel mill worker said, “Most of us have more than 30 years of service with your products, but Al showed and told us things we did not know. This class will help us do our jobs more safely.”

Another customer who works in an auto plant saw a direct benefit of the training. “Usually after a semi-annual inspection of slings, we find about 150 to 200 slings that need to be thrown out,” he said. After attending Abel’s training class, the next inspection turned up only 14 slings to be removed from service. “The individuals who came to Al’s training classes ascertained enough to recognize and remove bad rigging from their areas and replace with new [prior to the semi-annual inspection]. This made huge news at corporate, so we will eventually see dividends from this,” the auto plant worker said.



Jim Canfield, Sales Manager and Presentation Specialist
Chicago Hardware and Fixture Company, Franklin Park, Ill.
Nominated by: Brian Herbstritt, Vice President

Chicago Hardware & Fixture Co. manufactures wire rope and chain fittings, industrial and marine hardware, and allied products. Primarily selling its products through distributors, safety training has become a way for Chicago Hardware to provide a service to end users of its products.

While Jim Canfield's primary job is in sales management, training customers has become a big part of his responsibilities. He took on training of his own accord initially as a way to help market the company's products. But in the three years since he joined the company,

offering training has become a priority. "Jim has taken ownership of this program and has a growing client list that includes steel mills, power generation facilities, commercial contractors, contractor associations and unions," says Brian Herbstritt, vice president.

According to Herbstritt, prior to Canfield joining Chicago Hardware, the company had standard product information developed for distributors and end users, "but Jim saw the benefit of concentrating on safety training in order to educate end users about best practices. Now Chicago Hardware is reaching more end users than ever before," says Herbstritt.

"Jim succeeds in keeping things fresh and interesting for students by using a hands-on approach. He distributes samples and visual aids, like misused and imported shackles and eyebolts," says Herbstritt. Recognizing that this is not the most exciting subject matter, Canfield encourages participation by throwing out T-shirts and hats to those who ask or answer questions. "Jim wants students to walk away with something they learned and won't forget," he says.

Canfield continues training outside the classroom. Herbstritt explains that part of the company's training program focuses on shackles and the dangers of mixing and matching pins. "Jim spotted this being done by a large mechanical contractor in Chicago at a high-profile jobsite. When the safety director was alerted, the items were pulled from the job and other jobs were checked. This company now does not let these parts leave the tool room unless all shackles are assembled as they should be."

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Ronald Gray, President

Tower Crane School of Phoenix, Phoenix, Ariz.

Nominated by: Former students, including Albert and Sabrina Silva, George LaTour Jr., Jim Conner, Kevin Berry, Tony Portillo, and Travis Dickerson

Ronald “Ronnie” Gray and his partner Patrick Stafford own the Tower Crane School of Phoenix which is a State of Arizona licensed school located in Phoenix. Gray has more than 30 years experience operating, rigging, and supervising heavy lifts. Since leaving the oil fields in 1987, where he spent 10 years on a 2,000-ton ship crane, he has operated all types of mobile and tower cranes. His resume includes the recovery of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* and working on two of the biggest oil field blow outs offshore alongside people like Red Adair, Wildcat Fighter. Gray became an NCCCO-accredited practical examiner in 2000.

Separately, several students nominated Gray, many of them crediting him with their ability to find work as crane operators after becom-

ing trained and certified by him. Some of them were new to crane operation. Others were veterans that needed to earn certification in order to remain employed.

In a recent article Gray wrote for *Crane Hot Line*, he described his students: “Our students come to us with varying levels of education and experience. We have trained and tested both union and nonunion operators. We have trained operators that have had several years of seat time but lack the basic skills necessary to solve load chart problems, answer questions regarding OSHA rules and regulations, or demonstrate practical crane skills. Working with these individuals has taught us that experience alone or good coordination will not ensure success in our profession. Even passing the NCCCO certification process is not enough. It is important that the industry recognize that operator training should never stop, and that newly certified students still have years of training ahead of them.”

A desire to find a new career brought Albert and Sabrina Silva to the Tower Crane School of Phoenix. The husband-and-wife operators previously ran a lunch truck at construction sites. “We had been struggling financially before becoming crane operators,” says Sabrina Silva. Both are now operating tower cranes on the West Coast. She says of Gray, “Ronnie goes beyond what is required of him to make sure all of his students get what they are paying for and have a complete understanding of what crane operating is all about. He is not one to sugar coat what is expected and explains all the responsibilities we have to keep ourselves and others out of harm.”

Another student also new to the profession, appreciated Gray’s patience during instruction. “I am 50 years old and new to cranes, but [Gray] managed to teach an old dog new tricks,” says Kevin Berry. “He spent time teaching us real-world applications, such as standing up a wall, delivering steel to the on-site steel framed building, and [how to do] two-crane picks.”

George LaTour Jr. recalled that Gray’s devotion to training extended beyond the students he was currently teaching. “One day a previous student that lived in another state called him needing help with a problem in a crane. Because of his extensive knowledge, Ronnie was able to help him over the phone.” In addition, LaTour appreciated that Gray demonstrated the importance of teamwork throughout the day from setup to tear down.

“We each got personal attention and our individual weaknesses were corrected,” says Tony Portillo. And Jim Conner says, “Ronnie taught my brother and me more in two weeks than either of us expected.” ■

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Ronald Gray

Tower Crane School of Phoenix

OTHER NOMINATIONS

Howard Kaplan

Southwest Industrial Rigging

John Newby

The Crosby Group

Donald “Doc” Bailey

All Crane Training

Winton Hancock

Crane Institute of America