



News release

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**Gateway students honor fallen veterans
through national Saluting Branches event**

Gateway Technical College Arboriculture/Urban Forestry Technician student Jenna Wickstrom said performing service work at a cemetery for servicemen and servicewomen held a personal as well professional meaning for her.

“My grandfather served and he passed away recently,” said Wickstrom. “I never thought about the work that needs to be done for events like this — and for a place like this, a cemetery. I think my grandfather would be proud of me.

“I am excited to get some hands-on work in the field and meet companies and learn. I also think it’s cool that we are able to serve others in this way.”

Wickstrom and her fellow Gateway Arboriculture students took part in the national Saluting Branches: Arborists United for Veteran Remembrance event this year, held in Wisconsin at the Wood National Cemetery in West Milwaukee.

Saluting Branches marks the largest day of service event in the arboriculture industry, bringing 4,000 professionals to donate time, talent and resources to work in 80 veterans cemeteries from across the country.

Gateway lead Arboriculture instructor Aaron Schauer has brought his students to the event for the past three years. He pairs students with area professionals to perform tree care work throughout the national cemetery, which has been a burial site for service members since 1871.

“To begin with, I think this is an opportunity for students to learn and to give back to their community, especially to the servicemen and servicewomen who gave everything for their country,” said Schauer.

“This is a way to honor them by ensuring their final resting place is well maintained, as well as a place their family and loved ones can come to visit in a peaceful and beautiful setting.”

Schauer also said the event provides students with a way to apply what they’ve learned in the classroom to a real-world setting. They gain the chance to work with industry professionals where they can learn from them, network with them and find out more about the industry they will soon enter.

“They can apply what they’ve learned but also connect with professionals from area companies,” said Schauer. “This is very unlike a class. It’s an actual workday to apply what they’ve learned in class. They’re a member of a work crew and find out how a crew works — and a lot about the industry.

“Professionals got to their current positions because they learned from others, and they don’t forget that. They like the opportunity to work with students who are getting ready to start their careers.”

As she readied herself for the event, student Avery Pollard said she was also looking forward to the hands-on aspect of the event.

“I am hoping I can make some connections with companies and learn some on-the-job experience, if you will, rather than only experiences in the classroom,” said Pollard.

Gateway Technical College's mission is to deliver industry-focused education that is flexible, accessible and affordable for our diverse community. The college collaborates with communities in Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers and communities.

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