

Giffing, Monica

**Page: Overview**

While “career and technical education (CTE)” is new to many, those in the field have long understood the power and importance of education that provides students with high-tech, real-world learning infused with career exploration. Not only is CTE at the roots of today’s most relevant education trends such as ‘STEM’ and ‘Maker Spaces,’ it’s a vital component to ensuring America’s economic prosperity and status as a leader for innovation. It is part of ACTE’s mission to ensure the value of CTE continues to grow and gain the recognition it deserves.

ACTE’s Champion for CTE Awards were created to recognize education leaders, business and industry executives, celebrities and thought leaders who support and champion CTE programs as a vital part of developing a prepared, adaptable and competitive workforce. The words and actions of a few dedicated and influential individuals have the power to further best practices, foster supportive policies, and shape a more positive public opinion of CTE. These awards showcase outstanding champions—from local leaders to national figureheads—who have leveraged their influence to expand, improve, and promote CTE.

These examples of model leadership serve to inspire and inform other leaders on creative and meaningful ways to positively impact the field. Highlighting their stories aligns with ACTE’s goal of cultivating a positive image of CTE and recognizing a broad community of supporters, ultimately creating a stronger vision for the future of CTE and empowering its leaders to speak with a unified voice.

If you know of a deserving candidate for this recognition, we urge you to explore ACTE’s preeminent awards program.

These awards are open to education leaders, business and industry executives, celebrities, thought leaders and other individuals who have made a significant impact on the improvement and expansion of CTE programs and/or on positively influencing policymakers and public opinion regarding CTE. *Federal policymakers are not eligible for these awards and should instead be nominated for [ACTE’s Policymaker of the Year Award](#).* Greater consideration will be given to candidates who have repeatedly demonstrated their public support for CTE and who exhibit an understanding of the components of modern, high-quality CTE.

Nominations will be accepted online until May 1 and may be submitted by the candidate or by a third party nominator. All candidates who meet eligibility and criteria requirements will be highlighted on ACTE's website as a 'Champion for CTE Spotlight.' Top nominations may be featured as model leaders in a future issue of *Techniques*, and/or invited to present sessions at ACTE's CareerTech VISION.

An independent panel will review all submissions to select the national recipient(s) of the ACTE Champion for CTE Award, which will then be considered for approval by the ACTE Board of Directors. Winners will be notified in August and recognized at the ACTE Awards Banquet during CareerTech VISION.

*All nominators permit ACTE to use and edit content of the application for promotional activities. ACTE reserves the right to maintain the anonymity of judges and confidentiality of their scores. Non-winning candidates may be re-nominated for the same or another Excellence Award the following year. Winning candidates at the national level may not be nominated for the same or another national ACTE Excellence Award within three years of their win.*

## **Page: Basic Information**

### **Nominator Information**

Please provide your information as the nominator of this candidate.

#### **Your Name**

Giffing, Monica

#### **Email Address**

monica.giffing@nebo.edu

#### **Title**

Agricultural Educator UAAE President

#### **Employer**

Nebo School District

#### **Phone Number**

8014049897

#### **Relationship to the Candidate**

Co-Worker

### **Candidate Information**

Please provide information on the candidate being nominated.

**Candidate's Name**

J. Merrill Hallam

**Title**

Teacher on Special Assignment - CTE Specialist

**Employer**

Nebo School District

**Work Address**

350 South Main  
Spanish Fork Utah 84660 US

**Email**

jmerrill.hallam@nebo.edu

**Phone Number**

8013428000

**Does the candidate have a background (diploma, certificate, degree) in a career and technical education field?**

Yes

**If yes, please provide more detail about their background in CTE.**

J. Merrill has been teaching since 1982. He has taught math, science, biology and computers. He is currently teaching biology part time and working part time with the CTE teachers in Nebo School District as a teacher on special assignment. He specifically works with the agriculture, wood, auto, and welding teachers.

1990 Brigham Young University  
Triple Master's Degrees  
Animal Science, Agronomy, Counseling  
Administrative Licensure

1982 Utah State University  
Agriculture Certification  
Trade and Industry Certification

1979 Brigham Young University  
Bachelor's Degree  
Animal Science

## Page: Description of Candidate

### 1. Please describe actions the candidate took to help expand, improve, and/or promote CTE.

Mr. Hallam is an advocate for Career and Technical Education; he knows the sense of satisfaction and self-worth that comes from this type of learning and wants the students in Nebo School District to feel this gratification in their education. As a teacher on special assignment J. Merrill worked with the Board of Education, District Administrators and school as well as teachers to procure funding to build new greenhouses, an auto body storage facility, and renovate and build new animal raising facilities at the high schools in our district. He then personally spent countless hours building them and making sure they are running at full efficiency, saving the school district thousands of dollars. During this construction period you would find him working over all the school breaks and late in the evening. Putting his personal farm and life on the back burner until construction was complete. The welding shops have also benefited from his commitment. He has secured funding to add plasma machines in the labs. This is a draw for more students to the program and helps them to gain skills that make them more career-ready in today's industry and trades job market.

J. Merrill has spent countless hours in his own classroom advocating for CTE application and STEM Education. His biology students understand the impact agriculture has on science and how science is agriculture. He assist many students take basic science concepts and apply them to real life agricultural scenarios and build a very successful science fair project. Several of his students have moved into the Agricultural Education program and have successfully participated on a state and national level FFA Science Fair. One student has been a National FFA Science Fair winner due to her project in regards to raising hogs.

He has served as a science fair judge on a district, state and national level for The National FFA Organization. He is always looking for ways to serve and help make these events educational and beneficial to all students.

### 2. How did the candidate's actions shape the adoption/expansion of best practices in CTE?

Due to his advocacy all CTE programs from Nebo School District have been able to expand their career ready programs, purchasing modern skill building equipment and maintaining it has been his goal. Many other programs in the state have sought out our teachers and directors for guidance and as a model to integrate in their own districts.

Payson High School agricultural program has been greatly expanded due to his commitment.  
Nyle Russell – Payson High School – Agricultural Educator stated;

"J. Merrill's favorite saying is "its therapy" referring to donating and doing things for others. He has donated thousands of bales of straw, last year him and his own children hauled 3 loads of straw themselves and quietly delivered it to Payson High's animal lab. He continues to donate corn for our feed. His drive and determination to do good towards others is unbelievable he is truly one of a kind!" By doing these acts of kindness the students at Payson High have a better and more successful experience.

Mr. Hallam reaches out to everyone in our district. Springville High School has a mentor program with Oakridge School, a school for the developmentally disabled (severe/profound) students in Nebo School District; High school students are partnered with these students to help them raise an animal. When J. Merrill learned of this program he immediately offered to personally donate 100% of whatever was needed to raise these animals with the students at Oakridge. Over three years this program has been in existence he has donated over 30 market hogs and tons of feed and straw. Because of his dedication to student success these students will have the opportunity to do something they have never done before and will make 100% profit off of their animals.

All of his actions encourage us to be better teachers; he finds ways to make learning meaningful and efficient for both teacher and student.

**3. How did the candidate's actions impact CTE policies or positively influence public opinion of CTE? How did these actions contribute to a broader understanding of modern CTE (not 'vocational education') that is robust, rigorous and relevant?**

I believe that by J. Merrill assisting to make our programs better, we have a better opportunity to engage more students and community members. Our communities are excited to see the changes and what it is doing for our students. Industry people look to us and our students for skilled employees.

J. Merrill finds great value in marketing the CTE programs and CTSO success' in our district. He is often seen at each program with his camera taking pictures of student and their projects. He uses these photos to promote the success and the added value of the investment the district is making. He reaches beyond the school board as well, he is often seen at the livestock shows taking pictures of other students and shortly after a show a cd will show up and a mother is forever grateful that he captured those pictures of her children. He regularly drops off hogs to be processed and ask for the meat to be donated to someone in need!

Mr. Hallam has made sure that the CTE programs are regularly on the School Boards agenda exclaiming the accomplishments of our students in a literal way. For example, during these presentations the welding students made a nativity silhouette with the new plasma machine, the floral design classes presented each Board member with a live flower arrangement and poinsettias grown in the greenhouse, and finally each Board member received a large frozen turkey that had been grown, killed and dressed by several members of the FFA. After the last presentation, the Board President exclaimed, "That was the best presentation we have ever had—and believe me we have seen a lot of them."

Mr. Hallam has taken Career and Technical Education to the next level in Nebo School District. Not only is he on the front row cheering for and promoting CTE he is the epitome of a champion when it comes to CTE students and the long-term effect this education has on them!

**4. What is the scope of the candidate's impact on CTE?**

National

**5. Would the candidate be willing to speak about their supportive efforts on behalf of CTE at an ACTE event?**

Not Sure