

Southern California Chapter Holds Casting Contest for Next Generation of Metalcasters

Since 1986, Bill Gardner has spent every January visiting high schools and colleges with metalcasting programs in Southern California. He delivers donated supplies such as sand, aluminum, and coreboxes to students who are interested in entering the AFS Southern California Chapter Student Casting Contest. Gardner picks a different pattern every year and presents the rules of the contest to young metalcasters.

"Bill is the engine that runs the casting contest," said AFS Southern California Chapter Secretary – Treasurer James Simonelli. "This year, Bill picked a wall-mounted bottle opener as the pattern for the competition."

To participate in the casting contest, applicants must be students in high school or college. Entries are judged on the entire casting, including the gating and riser system. There are two key categories for judges to consider. The first, winners are ranked from 1st to 4th place. The second, a best of school category where a winner is declared from each participating school.

This year, the chapter held its annual competition on April 17 at Cal Poly Pomona University with a crowd of nearly 100 people. Attendance was particularly

high this year, with the FEF Board of Directors witnessing young metalcasters present their castings.

"In Southern California we have a shortage of labor," Simonelli said. "Our main goal is student outreach so we can create the best foundry workers for the future."

The goal of student outreach is ingrained in the chapter's culture. Southern California Chapter Chair Jason Gutierrez understands that encouraging young metalcasters can have a profound effect on their careers. Gutierrez knows this because he was once a student in the casting competition himself.

"It's a bit surreal to be completely honest," Gutierrez said. "In 2010, I received an AFS SoCal Scholarship for the casting contest and just handed out the same scholarship to a Cal Poly Pomona student in April. I remember meeting the local industry leaders as an FEF student at Cal Poly Pomona, thinking that it would be great to be a part of that group. Now being involved as the AFS SoCal Chapter Chair, it really feels like I have come full circle."

It's important to remember what is at the heart of the Student Casting Contest. It's more than a just competition with



Jason Gutierrez (left) and Bill Gardner (right) present an award to a student winner.

prize money. It's an opportunity to get experienced metalcasters in the same room as the next generation. Without events like the student casting contest, growth within the metalcasting industry would hit a plateau.

"It will be up to the next generation of metalcasters to develop and implement new technology and processes," Gutierrez said. "Without educating our future leaders and metalcasters, we would be doing ourselves a disservice and putting the industry at risk."

With the AFS Southern California Chapter Student Casting Contest wrapped up for the year, fundraising for the 2019 competition begins almost immediately. With a golf tournament fundraiser in August, and Gardner returning to local schools with supplies in January, the chapter is hard at work in supporting the next generation of metalcasters.

When asked what excites Gutierrez most about supporting the next generation metalcasters, his passion is evident and contagious.

"I'm an advocate of technology and I'm excited to see what's next," he said. "I want to see where the industry goes as we navigate the ever-changing business climate and how it's approached by the next generation of leaders."



Bill Gardner (left) and Jason Gutierrez (right) present awards at the Southern California Chapter Student Casting Contest.