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## **AMERICAN WELDING SOCIETY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES NEW BOARD APPOINTMENT**

**Miami, FL, February 19, 2008** – The [American Welding Society](#) (AWS), the world’s largest organization dedicated to advancing the science, technology and application of welding, and the [AWS Foundation](#) announced today they have appointed Rick Richardson to the AWS Foundation board. He will serve a 3-year term.

Mr. Richardson’s welding career encompasses 30 years of executive leadership and industry volunteer work. He is the owner of Sky Cylinder Testing, Inc. based in Evansville, IN, a company he founded in 1999 that services the high-pressure cylinder gas, propane and refrigerant industries with a dedication to hydrostatic and ultrasonic cylinder retesting. While at inception Sky Cylinder’s primary focus was limited to the Southern Indiana market, it has since grown to service contracts across the United States. In 1980, Mr. Richardson became partner at Hoprich Company, Inc., a major independent distributor of industrial, specialty and medical gases and related equipment and supplies in Indiana and Kentucky. Seven years after joining Hoprich, he took office as president, a post which he maintained until the company was acquired by Airgas, Inc. (NYSE-ARG) in 1998.

“We are pleased to welcome Rick to the AWS Foundation Board,” said AWS Foundation chairman Ronald C. Pierce. “We have entered into a particularly critical period for the welding industry. Welding businesses are in peril due to a nationwide shortage of welders, and the AWS Foundation has made it a primary mission to help fund and relieve this problem. Rick’s advocacy, passion for the industry, and executive leadership experience will be valuable as the Foundation continues to reach out to businesses for support and participation.”

It is estimated that there will be a shortage of at least 200,000 welders by 2010. In 2006 the AWS Foundation embarked on a \$10 million dollar industry capital campaign, [Welding for the Strength of America](#), which is aimed at facilitating programs, scholarships, recruitment efforts and other initiatives designed to relieve the nationwide shortage of welders. At year-end 2007, the AWS Foundation had raised \$2.6 million toward the campaign effort.

Mr. Richardson is a 23-year member of the American Welding Society, and a past chairman of the [Independent Welding Distributor Cooperative](#), which consists of independent gas and welding businesses located throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Outside of the welding industry, Mr. Richardson is an active partner in a family owned commercial real estate and development venture, and founding member of the Indiana-based Bank of Evansville, where he currently serves on its board of directors. He graduated from the University of Denver with a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, and lives in Evansville with his wife, Chris, and two daughters, Ellen and Claire.

### About AWS

*The American Welding Society (AWS) was founded in 1919 as a multifaceted, nonprofit organization with a mission to advance the science, technology and application of welding and allied joining and cutting processes, including brazing, soldering, and thermal spraying. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, and led by a volunteer organization of officers and directors, AWS serves more than 50,000 members worldwide and is composed of 22 districts with about 160 sections and student chapters. For more information, visit the Society’s website at <http://www.aws.org> and click on “[pressroom](#).”*