

NEWS RELEASE

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Northwest Iowa Community College recognizes Art Van Bruggen as the 2016 Alumnus of the Year

Each year, one outstanding graduate of Northwest Iowa Community College is recognized for his or her accomplishments. The recipient of the 2016 Alumnus of the Year is Art Van Bruggen of Boyden. Art was a welding graduate in Northwest Iowa Community College's (then Northwest Iowa Vocational School) first graduating class in 1966. The Alumnus of the Year recognition was held in conjunction with the College's May Commencement exercises on May 13, 2016.

Art Van Bruggen grew up on a farm between Sheldon and Boyden. He attended Western Christian High School until his mid-junior year. At that time, Art decided he should learn an employable skill. Art started to take welding classes at Northwest Iowa Vocational School (NIVS). This decision required Art to split his day between welding classes through NIVS and the Sheldon High School in order to complete his high school diploma. At that time, NIVS didn't have a specific campus, and Art took his welding classes in a make-shift classroom and lab, located in downtown Sheldon. He graduated from Northwest Iowa Vocational School in July of 1966.

By the fall, Art and a friend moved to Grand Rapids, MI, where Art found work as a blacksmith. By 1968, Art was drafted into the military during the Vietnam War. He spent one year stateside, and then served in the field artillery unit in Vietnam for a year. While serving, Art had the privilege to see Bob Hope entertain during one of his legendary USO performances. During the show, a special push was made for those serving in the war to check into utilizing the GI Bill to advance their education once their tour of duty was up. This was the beginning of the next step in Art's career. When he was released from active service in June of 1977, Art returned to Michigan, and enrolled in the Lawrence Institute of Technology in Detroit utilizing the GI Bill. The goal was to become an accountant after completing his degree in Industrial Management. Once Art completed his degree he moved back to Northwest Iowa to be closer to his family's farm. Although he had a new degree in Industrial Management under his belt, Art began to work on his family's farm, utilizing the welding knowledge that he obtained nearly a decade before.

In 1977, Art started his own accounting firm: Arthur VanBruggen Certified Public Accountant. He still worked on the farm while beginning his start-up venture. The business steadily grew. Art became the first practicing CPA in Sioux County. He excelled at customer service, spending much of his time working with businesses and individuals on topics like estate planning, tax preparing and financial advising. The company's growth and eventual merger is now known as "Van Bruggen and Vande Vegte CPA's" and has locations in Boyden, Rock Valley and Orange City. Van Bruggen and Vande Vegte employs approximately 39 people, including many other NCC alums. Although Art is slowly phasing into retirement, he is far from slowing down. Art began a tree farm at the west end of Boyden 15 years ago, and Art spends a lot of his free time tending to his trees. Furthermore, Art is extremely active in civic work. He is an engaged volunteer for the Boyden Betterment Club, the Northwest Iowa Gideons, the Boyden Economic Development Corporation, and the Boyden Association of Churches, and the Boyden City Council. He is a very active member of the Tabernacle Baptist Church where he serves as mission fund treasurer.

Beyond that, he has completed numerous local and international mission trips, including projects in Haiti and China to deliver Bibles to underserved populations.

Although Art didn't work as a welder for a majority of his professional life, he still uses his welding skills around his tree farm and when he tinkers on his family's farm, as well as on his most recent trip to Haiti. He also continues the relationships he built during his coursework at NCC, as he is still in contact with a number of his former classmates and even his old instructor, Stan Hulstein.

Kristi Landis, Northwest Iowa Community College's Alumni Coordinator, said "Art's the definition of a lifelong learner, and his personal interest in bettering himself and the community around him is why NCC is so proud to call Art Van Bruggen an alum."

Larry Hoekstra, Northwest Iowa Community College Board of Trustee and a longtime friend of Art, said "It has been said that the purpose of education is to light a fire inside an individual, and to initiate a desire for continuous, and life-long learning. Art has demonstrated life-long learning since attending NCC 50 years ago."

Art is married to his wife, Nancy. They have 6 children and 10 grandchildren.