

# Pride in Our Profession: Together We Make It Work

“DON'T FALL FOR THE MEDIA SPIN AND HYPE SURROUNDING THE TOUGH TIMES AND CHOICES THAT LIE AHEAD. **YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE! IN FACT, YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!**”

**YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE! NO DOUBT ABOUT IT—** these are trying times for education and it seems like we're under fire from every direction. Funding, performance and overall effectiveness are just a few of the shots taken almost daily and reported by the media. Don't fall for the media spin and hype surrounding the tough times and choices that lie ahead. **YOU** make a difference! In fact, **YOU** make *the* difference! I travel the country and have the distinct pleasure of working with career and technical education (CTE) teachers, critical support staff members, and administrators every day in my capacity as a CTE enrollment and retention expert. The amazing teams of CTE professionals that I interact with care deeply for the work they do—and they are changing countless lives for the better.

## A Tale of Two Brothers

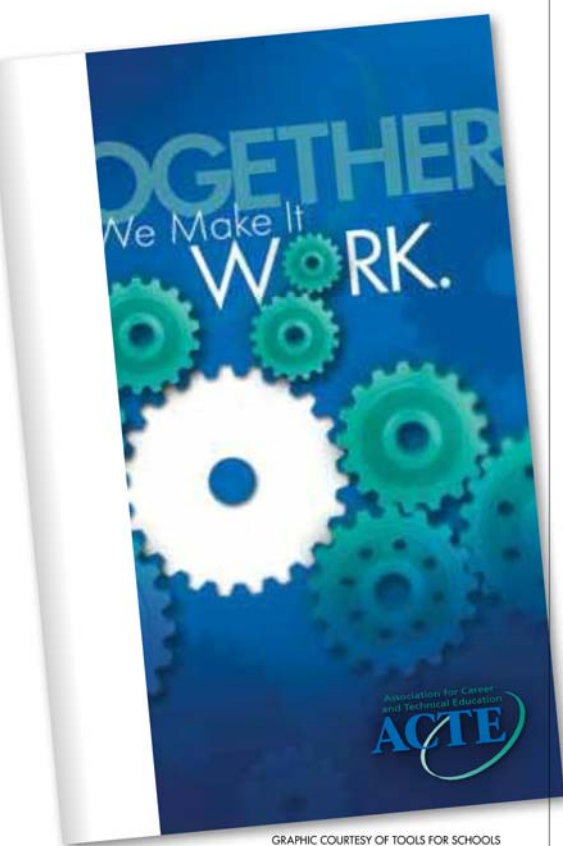
The perfect CTE success story is unfolding in my own family. I have two sons, Matt, 24, and Nick, 22, both great young men who are very different from one another. During high school, Matt did not get an opportunity for CTE due to changing school districts after his sophomore year. Consequently, when he went on to Ohio University, he needed to do career exploration for his first several years at \$2,200 per month. (Can you relate to that?) In that respect, he is a lot like me—I did the same thing. Matt finally settled on a course of study that best fit his strengths, and today is very successful as a proud member of our *Tools for Schools* team, helping CTE schools

strategically plan their integration of social media while building a powerful Web presence. Perfect fit: mission accomplished.

Nick, on the other hand, has known what he wanted to do since he was a fetus. He wants to work with computers and be a programming guru. During his sophomore year of high school he toured Cuyahoga Valley Career Center's (CVCC) Programming and Software Development Program in the suburbs of Cleveland, and was hooked. This program changed Nick's life. Up to that day, Nick was sporting an impressive 1.5 grade point average, had missed the maximum number of school days of his first two years of high school, and turned in homework as frequently as Halley's Comet passes within eyeshot of our planet.

But despite all this, Nick aced every test. Imagine the parental frustration of watching your extremely intelligent son, with a 4.0 understanding of everything that was taught to him, never turn in homework because he saw it as a complete waste of time. I know what you're thinking...yes, I tried everything! I watched, guided, pressured and hounded him like a storm trooper in hot pursuit. Even when he completed his homework and it was visually verified, somehow before he reached school it would magically disappear from his book bag, pocket or underwear (for all I know).

The truth is that Nick wasn't engaged in his education. He didn't understand why so much time in school was spent doing things he had no interest in doing. That all changed the day he was accepted



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF TOOLS FOR SCHOOLS

“CTE HAS HAD AN INCREDIBLE IMPACT, BOTH IN MY FAMILY AND IN THOUSANDS OF OTHER FAMILIES NATIONWIDE. I AM A BELIEVER! AND YET, AS EXCITING AS THESE SUCCESS STORIES ARE, I WONDER HOW MUCH MORE WE COULD ACCOMPLISH IF WE PULLED TOGETHER OUR SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS AND MADE OUR COLLECTIVE VOICE HEARD, UNIFIED AS A PROFESSION.”

to CVCC. Nick’s junior and senior years were the complete opposite of his first two. He missed only two days during both years (and that was because I had to keep him home with a high temperature). He loved school, he loved programming, and he was really good at it. CTE changed Nick’s life—because he was the right student, in the right program, for the right reasons.

Fast-forward a couple years. Nick significantly increased his grade point average in high school and graduated with a small scholarship to Akron University. He is a senior today with a 3.0 grade point average, on his way to a bachelor of science degree in programming and software development. He has a paid internship at a local health care software firm that has offered to hire him full-time upon graduation, while also paying for his graduate studies to become a professional software engineer. Perfect fit: mission accomplished.

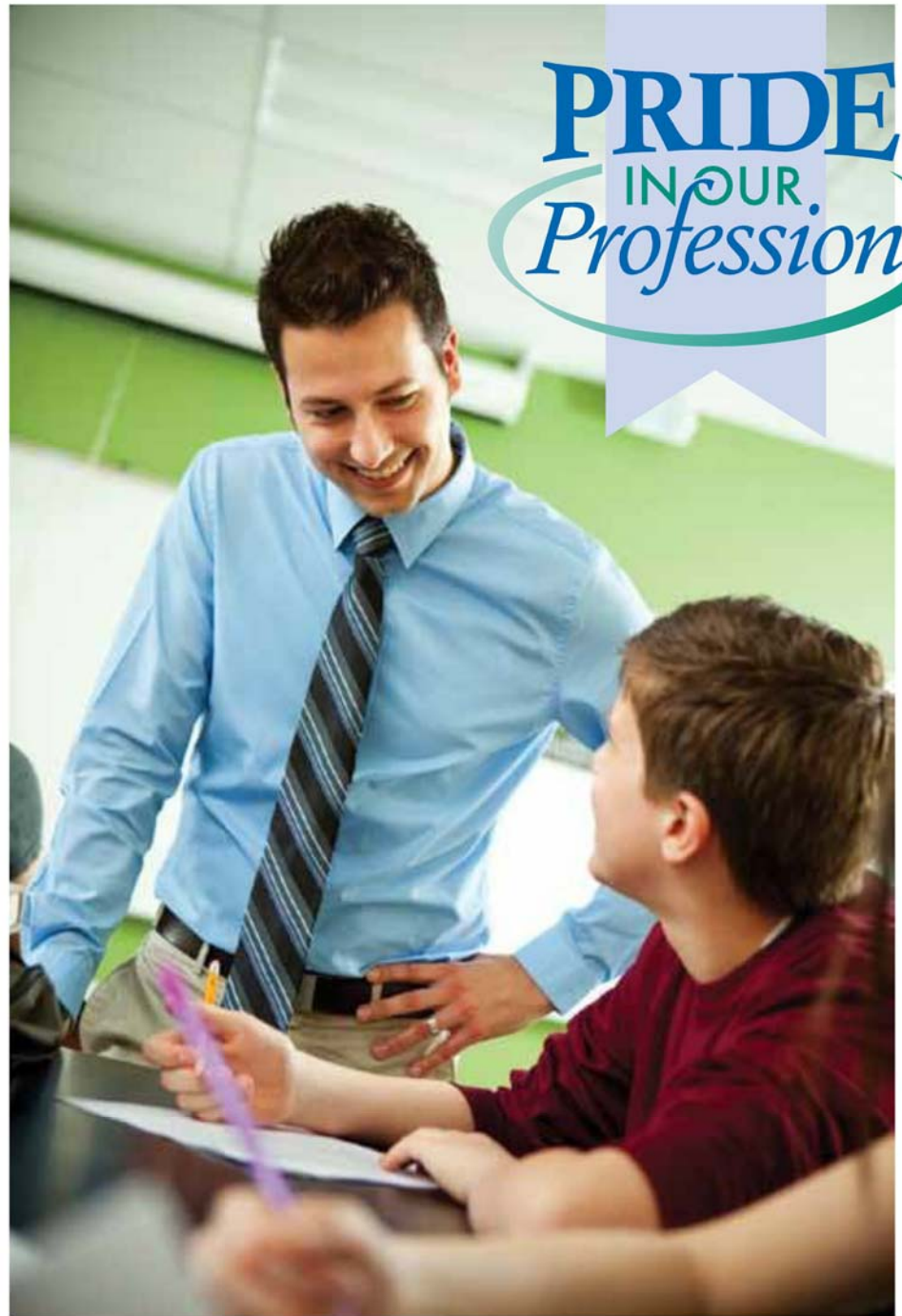


PHOTO BY ISTOCK.COM

### **Pulling Together to Make it Work**


This story is not unique; in fact as I travel, I hear thousands of similar stories from parents and schools throughout the nation. I am a passionate and outspoken CTE supporter, because CTE has had an incredible impact, both in my family and

in thousands of other families nationwide. I am a believer! And yet, as exciting as these success stories are, I wonder how much *more* we could accomplish if we pulled together our significant numbers and made our collective voice heard, unified as a profession. There

## How to Significantly Increase Enrollment, Retention and Graduation Rates With Millennials!

In this half-day pre-Convention workshop at the 2011 Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) Annual Convention, in St. Louis, enrollment and retention expert Mark C. Perna will highlight the secrets to significantly increase enrollment, retention and graduation rates. These decisive and timely enrollment strategies are critical in today's highly competitive "outcome-based" educational marketplace. Attendees will discover:

- Powerful and proven CTE enrollment and retention strategies—perfect for administrators, teachers and critical support team members.
- The keys to the Millennial Generation and what makes them tick, how they make decisions, and the critical tactics for connecting, engaging and retaining them through graduation (for both high school and adult Millennials).
- The power of the "Funnel" strategy in recruiting, retaining and graduating students in far greater numbers.
- The keys to developing an enrollment- and retention-driven organization that understands the power of the "Light at the End of the Tunnel" strategy.
- How to create "Program Copy Points" that get noticed and make your programs easy to understand. Short, sweet and to the point!

This workshop will take place 8:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 16, in St. Louis. For more information, visit [www.acteonline.org/convention.aspx](http://www.acteonline.org/convention.aspx). 

is considerable strength in numbers. I am not talking about advocacy; I am talking about a proud profession filled with proud professionals all pulling in the same direction. It starts with you, a CTE professional making a local difference that positively impacts your community, your state, and ultimately our nation. There is so much to be proud of! What you do every day makes a real difference.

What if we really got serious about increasing the impact of CTE on a fledgling education and economic system? I hear people chat about it...but what if? The possibilities are endless. It starts with building our numbers and significantly increasing membership. It continues with active involvement in local, state and national issues. Get involved, get others involved, and make the amazing success stories even more of a norm.

### "It Wasn't a Miracle..."

One of my favorite movies is *Apollo 13* (1995) because it contains a line that so inspired me that I have had it hanging above my desk ever since. The movie starts with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin taking those first historic steps on the moon on July 20, 1969. After throwing a party to celebrate the achievement, Commander Jim Lovell (played by Tom Hanks) and his wife are lying on their patio looking up at the moon. Lovell says, "From now on we live in a world where man has walked on the moon—it wasn't a miracle; we just decided to go." An amazing line of hope. "It wasn't a miracle; we just decided to go." And it's stated as if the toughest part of the journey was simply making the decision to go.

Back up to May 25, 1961, when John F. Kennedy, speaking before a joint session



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FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT [WWW.ACTECONVENTION.COM](http://WWW.ACTECONVENTION.COM).

**“IT STARTS WITH YOU, A CTE PROFESSIONAL MAKING A LOCAL DIFFERENCE THAT POSITIVELY IMPACTS YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR STATE AND ULTIMATELY OUR NATION. THERE IS SO MUCH TO BE PROUD OF! WHAT YOU DO EVERY DAY MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE.”**

of Congress, said, “This nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth.” At the time he said those words, we had no idea how to accomplish that aim. No one had ever heard of “Earth Orbit Rendezvous,” and the equipment and technology needed to make the journey had not yet been produced, tested or even conceived of.

Kennedy went on to say: “We do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard.” Yet, hundreds of thousands of Americans worked tirelessly to accomplish that goal of landing two men on the moon on July 20, 1969, and returning them safely to the Earth. It wasn’t a miracle; we just decided to go.

### Taking Pride in Our Profession

What if we, too, simply decided to go? There is so much to be proud of, but achieving the shared goals of our profession will take passionate individuals willing to stand up, take action and share their enthusiasm with each other, our communities and a nation that truly needs our expertise. I have traveled extensively and worked with thousands of CTE professionals and I am still in awe of the dedication and expertise I see in their work every day. It ignites my enthusiasm and makes me better at delivering the standard of excellence I set for myself. So go ahead. Be proud. Be proud of what you do, be proud of your profession, and be proud of the powerful difference YOU are making. Together, we make it work! **T**

## ACTE and YOU!

ACTE is a partnership, a resource, a community, an ally—and an idea. We believe that great things happen when we leverage the power of our collective voice, find strength in our diverse talents, and pull together to make a difference in education. We take pride in the incredible work we do, both in our communities and as a powerful network across the country. YOU make the difference and are an integral part of our shared success story.

### Several Key Ways to Make a Greater Impact

- Get to know and regularly interact with the other CTE professionals in your local, state and national peer groups—there is considerable strength in numbers.
  - Share your success stories and best practices with passion.
  - Encourage several colleagues to join you today as proud members of ACTE.

- Take advantage of the vast array of tools and resources available through ACTE to make your job easier, more productive and more impactful.
- Add your important voice to crucial CTE issues online, at conferences and at the ACTE Annual Convention.
- Join the Ambassador Network and become a critical resource for the media to accurately shape community awareness about CTE. **T**

### Mark C. Perna

is the founder of “Tools for Schools” in Cleveland, Ohio, a full-service marketing and consulting firm that specializes in the career and technical education field. He has worked with schools, districts and statewide organizations of all sizes across the country to help them achieve significant gains in enrollment, retention and community awareness.

Perna is a proud member of ACTE and has had numerous articles published on marketing in national publications. He has delivered many dynamic keynote speeches across the country and is one of five founding CTE Master Consultants in ACTE’s Consulting Services Division, established to deliver critical support, best practices and strategic excellence to CTE schools nationwide. He can be reached at 216-215-8115, via e-mail at mark@MT4S.com, or through the Tools for Schools Web site at [www.MT4S.com](http://www.MT4S.com).

Interested in exploring this topic further? Discuss it with your colleagues on the ACTE forums at [www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx](http://www.acteonline.org/forum.aspx).



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