

Jerry Kottschade, Winona Outstanding Alumnus

Nominated by Auto Body instructor Tom Brandt, Jerry Kottschade has built a career and business using the foundational skills he learned at Southeast Technical. “The education gave me all the basics I wanted. It was a good experience for me,” Kottschade, a Class of '68 graduate, says.

After graduating from Southeast Technical’s Auto Body program, Jerry worked at Ben’s Beeline Auto collision shop in Mankato while earning a degree in Business Administration from Mankato State University. Pairing his technical skills with strong business acumen, Jerry opened Jerry’s Body Shop, Inc., in 1971 in Mankato with his wife Geralynn (Geri). Through the years, Jerry’s Body Shop has grown to support a crew of 23 technicians and office staff at a 19,000 square foot facility constructed in 1987.



In addition to serving in leadership roles for several automotive associations, Jerry was instrumental in shaping Southeast Technical’s Auto Body program as it is known today. As a member of a five-year program evaluation team in 1986, Jerry reviewed the college’s program and helped make significant steps toward restructuring it to align with employer and industry expectations, spending his own time contacting business connections and helping secure needed equipment to update the college’s shop. Jerry even invited a group of Auto Body advisory committee members and school administrators to visit his shop in Mankato, a tour which was the inspiration for upgrades that took place on the Winona campus in 1988.

Jerry has high regard for Southeast Technical’s Auto Body program and has hired graduates over the years, some staying long term. His wife Geri has also been supportive of the program and helped one of the first female students in the program secure an industry scholarship.