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Newsmaker

# Mary Kaye Bredeson, Tim Komberec and Tool Gauge win Pacific Northwest Aerospace Alliance honors

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Mary Kaye Bredeson, executive director of Seattle's Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing, was honored by the Pacific Northwest Aerospace Alliance at its annual conference last week.

Bredeson won a PNAA 2017 Inspire Award for her 15 years of dedication working with nearly three dozen Washington state community and technical colleges to stimulate student interest in manufacturing and help develop skills they need for aerospace careers.

She has worked to intertwine Washington's community and technical college system with aerospace giants like like Boeing and Lockheed Martin Corp., but also Amazon.com and Fluke Corp., an Everett-based manufacturer of electronics, electronic testing tools and biomedical equipment.

PNAA CEO Melanie Jordan described Bredeson as "an inspiration for aerospace education since I first met her in 2003 as we were building the Future of Flight Aviation Center."



PNAA PHOTO

Mary Kaye Bredeson is the executive director of the Center of Excellence for Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing in Seattle.

"She is a tireless advocate for the industry and excels in outreach and subsequent teamwork in developing programs, garnering grants, writing curriculum and providing inspiration to all," Jordan said.

The PNAA also honored Tim Komberec, who is the president and CEO of Empire Aerospace and Empire Airlines, as Executive of the Year for 2017.

The PNAA Executive of the Year award is given to an aerospace company executive who has made significant contributions to the advancement of the aerospace industry in the Pacific Northwest.

The industry group said Komberec has transformed the Idaho-based company he leads into a nimble airline with 350 workers known for displaying a can-do attitude.

Empire builds and repairs airplanes, trains and educates flight crews and mechanics, and works with major air cargo companies. Empire also helps airline startups.

Under Komberec, Empire Airlines built a 50,000-square-foot facility at the Coeur d'Alene Airport that provides heavy maintenance and modifications for large turbo-prop and regional jets.

Empire has also launched Empire Unmanned, a fast-growing commercial unmanned aerial systems and drone business that helps perform structural inspection and wildfire damage analysis. The division serves companies in agriculture, mining, forestry and civil engineering.

Tacoma-based Boeing supplier Tool Gauge was named PNAA Company of the Year for its commitment to excellence as a key metal parts maker and plastics interiors part supplier for the Boeing 737, 787 and 777X programs. The company has embarked on a major expansion to double its manufacturing footprint.

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