**JIM LINDENMAYER LEADERSHIP AWARD: LORI SHAEFER-WEATON**

Lori Schaefer-Weaton is the President of Agri-Industrial Plastics in Fairfield, Iowa. On a daily basis she provided leadership to over 170 employees at a company that continues to expand. Under Lori’s leadership Agri recently completed the largest expansion project in their 36 year history, adding 104,000 square feet to their existing 240,000 square foot facility. This physical expansion was needed largely due to their phenomenal sales growth over the past 10 years. Since Lori joined the business in 2004 as Director of Business Development their sales have more than doubled.

As Agri’s business has grown, so has their commitment to their employees. In addition to a profit sharing plan and a full compensation family health care plan, under Lori’s leadership Agri has also became a certified Blue Zones employer. Nurses visit the company every month to do biometrics for employees and their spouses, employees now take their breaks in a state of the art break room, full of natural light and health food choice options. The company also hosts a wide range of social events, from the annual Christmas party to family barbeques.

Lori’s leadership is not limited to the walls of Agri-Industrial Plastics. Since moving back to Fairfield she has been an active supporter of the community. Lori is a past president of the Fairfield Economic Development Association and continues to serve on that board. As an active member of this group, Lori has been an integral part of several important initiatives within the Fairfield community, including helping set the direction for the Fairfield Area Career Academy.

In addition to being a big supporter of the Fairfield Area Career Academy, Lori finds many other ways to advocate for students and learning. She serves as a member of the Leadership Advisory Committee at Indian Hills Community College which provides feedback and direction for all the leadership programming that the college offers. She also regularly welcomes groups of students into Agri to learn about the opportunities available in Advanced Manufacturing.

At the state level, Lori has served many years on the Association of Business and Industry (ABI) Board of Directors. She currently serves as Treasurer for the group, making her a member of that board’s Executive Committee. As an active member of ABI, Lori advocates tirelessly on behalf of advanced manufacturing. ABI recently recognized Lori for this work by awarding her with their first ever Advocacy in Action award.

No matter which organizational hat Lori is wearing, one of her main focus areas is improving the image of advanced manufacturing careers throughout the state. She is a huge advocate and supporter of Elevate Advanced Manufacturing, a statewide campaign that is working “to break the negative misperceptions about manufacturers and educate students about the careers available at Iowa’s manufacturing companies”.

Lori grew up in Fairfield and graduated from Fairfield High School in 1985. After graduation she attended Valparaiso University graduating with an Accounting degree and Marketing/Communications minor. She later completed an executive MBS program at Northwestern University. She and her husband Nate, have 5 children.