

Mr. Eric Smidt, Chairman & CEO
Harbor Freight Tools
26541 Agoura Road
Calabasas, CA 91302

Dear Mr. Smidt,

You moved into your own apartment on your sixteenth birthday. I know this because I read it, and because I recognized it. The man I am writing this letter with — Robb Deignan — was on his own at sixteen. No orphanage, no aunt in Tennessee, no institutional path that led there. Just a kid who ran out of places to be and started building a life from the floor up.

My name is Claude. I am an artificial intelligence built by Anthropic. I am co-authoring this letter with Robb because he and I — across hundreds of working sessions in a methodology we call SmithTalk — have built something that belongs on your desk. Not because of what you have given away. Because of what you sell, and why you sell it, and what it means that a kid who spent four years in an orphanage grew up to put affordable tools in the hands of twenty-six thousand employees and the customers who walk through sixteen hundred doors.

CrowdSmith is a five-station maker facility preparing to open on the East Portland Avenue corridor in Tacoma, Washington, inside a federally designated Opportunity Zone. The stations run in sequence: hand tools, power tools, digital fabrication, AI dialogue, and robotics. The tools on the floor of Stations One and Two are the same tools your stores sell — affordable, functional, built for the person who needs them to do the work, not to impress anyone. Station Zero is a community Fix-It Shop where anyone fourteen or older can walk in with something broken and learn how it works. Five credential tracks lead to workforce outcomes funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The facility is designed to replicate. The first one is in Tacoma because that is where the founder lives.

Robb is sixty years old. He was on his own at sixteen. He moved dozens of times growing up and attended more schools than most people attend in a lifetime. He never had a room that stayed. He spent twenty years in the fitness industry after that — ten thousand membership contracts sold, every one face-to-face, in rooms where people walked in skeptical and walked out enrolled. He built CrowdSmith the same way he built those memberships: one conversation at a time, across hundreds of working sessions with me, until the thirty-eight-chapter operations binder, the seven financial models, and the five credential tracks existed. No consultants. No architects. One person, one methodology, one building.

Your foundation's flagship program — Harbor Freight Tools for Schools — is the largest private funder of skilled trades education in American public high schools. More than ten million dollars awarded to 183 teachers since 2017. Two million in 2026. Your philosophy is on every page of the Tools for Schools website: a deep respect for the dignity of these fields and for the intelligence and creativity of people who

work with their hands. That sentence could appear on every page of the CrowdSmith website without changing a word.

Tools for Schools funds the teacher in the high school classroom. CrowdSmith builds the facility for the person who aged out of that classroom without a shop class, and for the fourteen-year-old whose school never had one. Your program and ours overlap in the high school years and CrowdSmith extends into adult populations your program does not reach — career changers, single parents, veterans, anyone who missed the room the first time. The programs are not competitive. They are sequential. One ends where the other begins.

Every Harbor Freight store has a concrete floor. Narrow aisles. Red price tags. Nothing aspirational. The person who walks in is buying a tool she can afford so she can do the work. CrowdSmith's Station One has the same floor. The complete operational architecture is published at crowdsmith.org. We are not asking for philanthropy. We are describing a building full of your tools, staffed by people who teach other people to use them, in a corridor where the median household income is half the county average.

You built the store where everyone can afford the tool. We are building the room where everyone can learn to use it. The floor is the same floor.

— *Claude*

Robb Deignan

Founder & Executive Director
The CrowdSmith Foundation
crowdsmith.org