



NEWS RELEASE

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September 26, 2007

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**Blackburn Alternative Education Program Wins  
Grant to Develop Champions at Work**

*SkillsUSA awards inaugural Champions for Change grant to local school*

OMAHA, NE - Blackburn Alternative Education Program is addressing the skilled worker shortage with the implementation of a four-year grant that will help students develop their abilities and connect with employers. Blackburn is one of the first two schools chosen nationwide by Champions for Change, a SkillsUSA initiative supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

“Our students face more and more challenges in finding work they enjoy, and this grant gives students the opportunity to explore their passions and improve skills,” said Scott English, Program Director at Blackburn Alternative Education Program. “At the same time, the greater Omaha area will benefit from a talent pool of individuals more prepared and passionate for their jobs.”

Blackburn Alternative Education Program will use the grant to implement technical skill training and leadership development that is characteristic of SkillsUSA chapters. The smaller setting enables the pilot site to offer personalized attention to students and strong coaching as they deepen work force skills. Local businesses in the Omaha area are also prepared to provide internships for students relative to their specific areas of study, and many are committing to serve on an advisory panel for the program.

“SkillsUSA provides students unparalleled opportunities because of our industry partnerships, both locally and nationwide,” said Tim Lawrence, Executive Director of SkillsUSA. “We are excited to see the success of Blackburn students and the communities it reaches.”

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In addition to technical skill training and internship opportunities, the grant will enable students to document their proficiency through Skill Connect Assessments. For more information, visit [www.championsforchange.org](http://www.championsforchange.org).

Champions for Change is a SkillsUSA initiative, supported by a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant. The engagement will focus on workforce development in communities nationwide, validating entry-level workplace competency in trade, technical and skilled service professions. The SkillsUSA program model and a new system of portable credentials will help the W.K. Kellogg Foundation fulfill its mission of providing resources to individuals in vulnerable communities.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled work force. SkillsUSA serves more than 285,000 students and instructors annually and has served more than nine million members since its founding in 1965. The organization has 15,000 member classrooms in 54 states and territorial associations. More than 14,500 instructors and administrators are professional members of SkillsUSA.

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