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NEWS RELEASE

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**Champions for Change Brings Together Broad Scope of Industry
*Industry and education experts build momentum for SkillsUSA initiative***

Leesburg, VA – More than 50 business and industry leaders collaborated at the SkillsUSA Headquarters on January 22 and 23 to begin translating SkillsUSA national contest standards into academically aligned standards as a part of the Champions for Change initiative.

Through Champions for Change, SkillsUSA will build nationally recognized credentials in 46 occupational areas, ranging from automotive service technology and carpentry to culinary skills and nurse assisting. The credentials will align industry-written competencies with academic standards.

“SkillsUSA provides students unparalleled opportunities because of our industry partnerships,” said Tim Lawrence, executive director of SkillsUSA. “Since 1967, industry partners have developed continuously updated contest standards to ensure relevance and value for young people and the industries they serve. This initiative takes those efforts further by creating consistency across all areas and confirming the right proficiency indicators.”

Once credentials and assessment tools are established, six pilot sites will implement the model.

“Champions for Change will provide young people opportunities to prove their entry-level skills and allows us to extend the benefits of SkillsUSA to at-risk youth nationwide,” Lawrence said.

For more information about Champions for Change and additional features from the Technical Committee Chairs meeting, visit www.championsforchange.org.

Champions for Change is a SkillsUSA initiative, supported by a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant. The program 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 at-risk individuals.

NEWS RELEASE

Champions for Change Brings Together Broad Scope of Industry Page 2

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.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 “to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.” Its programming activities center around the common vision of a world in which each person has a sense of worth; accepts responsibility for self, family, community, and societal well-being; and has the capacity to be productive, and to help create nurturing families, responsive institutions, and healthy communities.

To achieve its greatest impact, the Foundation targets grants toward specific areas. These include health; food systems and rural development; youth and education; and philanthropy and voluntarism. Within these areas, attention is given to exploring learning opportunities in leadership; information and communication technology; capitalizing on diversity; and social and economic community development. Grants are concentrated in the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the southern African countries Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe.

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