Entrepreneurial Spirit

The Art of Business

SkillsUSA champions

creative careers
a skateboard company that helps others

building guitars by hand

tornado survivors recover for a win

still serving:
from military to SkillsUSA life

Entrepreneurial Spirit

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She's Wheeling Her Way to the Top
Skateboard artist Leah Rife started a business to help others channel their creativity. See what this young entrepreneur has learned.
BY E. THOMAS HALL

One Big Twist on the Path to Winning
After a record-breaking tornado wiped out their school, students had to quickly pull together for the SkillsUSA Championships.
BY ANN P. SCHREIBER

A Bridge Between Two Lives
Teamwork. Hard work. Continuous improvement. These SkillsUSA principles helped Tony Hamblin cross into civilian life after decades in military service.
BY CRAIG E. MOORE

Gold Standard: Student
This SkillsUSA member doesn’t just make music. He can build his own guitar.
BY TOM KERCHEVAL

TAG, You’re It!
A new day dawns as SkillsUSA conference delegates “Train, Act and Grow.”
GUEST ARTICLE BY GAYLE SILVEY

On the Cover:
SkillsUSA Champion Krystina Brown of Greece, N.Y. Photo by Lloyd Wolf.
SkillsUSA is the official magazine of SkillsUSA. It is published four times a year—Fall (October/November), Winter (December/January), Spring (February/March), and Summer (April/May)—by SkillsUSA Inc. at 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. Periodical postage paid at Leesburg, VA, and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2014 by SkillsUSA. All rights reserved. Nonmember subscriptions: $15 per year (SkillsUSA members, $1.30 paid with dues or affiliation fees).

Visit the SkillsUSA Champions "e-zine" version at www.skillsusa.org/champions/ to flip through articles, view videos and extra photos and get updates. You’ll find archives of past issues, advertiser links, lesson plans for new issues, and more.

See even more champions on our frequently updated website, www.skillsusa.org, as well as:

www.skillsusa.org/champions/
Executive Director Tim Lawrence has known SkillsUSA as a student member, instructor, industry partner and state director. Got a question? He can help.

Q: I see SkillsUSA always pushing to be bigger and better. Can I apply your methods toward my own success?  
Tim: SkillsUSA’s membership numbers are at the highest levels ever. So are our partnerships, through which we grant more than $1 million each year in direct support to schools and students. This June, at SkillsUSA’s 50th National Leadership and Skills Conference, we’ll kick off a yearlong celebration of our 50th birthday in 2015. It’s been an amazing journey.

SkillsUSA didn’t achieve this success in a vacuum, but through collaboration. Our founders, leaders, partners and staff have worked together to guide this growth. In your own personal journey, you have systems and people to guide you, too.

In this issue, you’ll read about members who found their direction with the help of others. When a tornado ripped through an Oklahoma school weeks before our national championships — ruining contest projects — advisors and alumni helped students recreate their materials and compete in Kansas City. You’ll also read about a couple of students who, by following their natural creative abilities and working with others, started a skateboard company and learned to build guitars.

For SkillsUSA to be this successful, it’s also taken a strong foundation, persistence and focused goals. Another student in this issue shows how you can apply these key factors personally. A little bit older and wiser, he’s transitioned from the military back to school and a new career path in information technology. He’s excelling as a SkillsUSA leader, not only locally or statewide, but also at the national level.

Whether facing a challenge individually — or as a team, as many of our local chapters have — there’s always someone standing behind you in SkillsUSA. Day to day, that may be your advisor or your fellow students. Some of you have been guided to your state conferences and competitions, and many will join the “best of the best” at nationals this June. No matter how far you reach, I encourage you to carry on SkillsUSA’s positive message and inspire others to participate in this growing, vibrant organization.

And if you’re moving to the next chapter in your life, whether education or a career, you can continue the journey through SkillsUSA’s alumni association. Membership is free and will keep you connected. I hope you’ll check out our website, www.skillsusa.org/supporters/alumni.shtml, and stay involved.

Got questions about SkillsUSA or other topics? Email anyinfo@skillsusa.org or send a letter to the address on the facing page. Put “Ask Tim” in the subject line or mail address.
SkillsUSA hits a major milestone in June: its 50th National Leadership and Skills Conference. The NLSC is always a time to celebrate, but this year, we’ll be turning things up a notch ... or 10.

Tuesday’s Champions Night kicks off the festivities, as students from across the nation let their metaphorical hair down and make some new, lifelong friends.

Wednesday’s Opening Ceremony features keynote speaker Chris Fischer, who’s led global scientific expeditions and pioneered the method for capturing and releasing mature great white sharks.

There’s the SkillsUSA Championships, where 6,000 state champions compete for gold in nearly 100 skilled and leadership areas. Add the nation’s biggest technical education trade show in SkillsUSA TECHSPO, the awesome Awards Ceremony, and much more in between, and 50 has never felt so ferocious.

SkillsUSA’s 50th national conference this June will be its last in Kansas City, Mo. In 2015, the conference moves to Louisville, Ky. Follow every moment at: www.skillsusa.org/events/nlsc.shtml.
STUDENT VOICES
MAKING NOISE, TURNING HEADS

Student representatives from nine career and technical student organizations recently traveled to the U.S. Department of Education to meet with Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and senior staff. The meeting was part of the department’s ongoing “Student Voices” series, where students engage with the secretary to help develop recommendations on current programs and policies.

Representing SkillsUSA at the meeting in Washington was Daria Ferdine (pictured with Duncan below), national high school treasurer. Ferdine was one of four students who made a presentation during an internal department briefing. Students discussed the missions and goals of their respective CTSOs, expressing confidence in the skills they’ve learned and the path they’ve set for their respective futures.

“The great thing about joining a CTSO, Ferdine stressed, “is that it doesn’t matter what race or religion or economic class you are; everyone is able to do it.” The students left their audience with a clearer sense of not only what CTSOs can do, but what they are doing, all across the country. For more details and quotes from the event, visit: tinyurl.com/afzve97.

Pave the Future, Honor the Past

As you may have noticed on the preceding page, SkillsUSA turns 50 in 2015, and many events are being planned. For example, SkillsUSA is launching a paver campaign at this year’s national conference in conjunction with plans to create a new walkway at its headquarters in Leesburg, Va. With the purchase of personalized, engraved paver bricks for the walkway, members can honor a special advisor, student group, state association, committed business partner, or anyone else they deem worthy. Bricks will be available for purchase at the conference and online. Stay tuned to www.skillsusa.org for details.

A great design helps us make conference shine

To commemorate SkillsUSA’s 50th National Leadership and Skills Conference this June, the SkillsUSA Alumni and Friends Association decided to hold a pin design competition. The winning design (pictured at left) will be used for the only official pin to designate the 50th national conference, and it will only be sold at SkillsUSA’s alumni booth during the week of the event.

The design is by Gayle Brodie, a former SkillsUSA member and a current chapter advisor and instructor at Abram Friedman Occupational Center in Los Angeles. She’ll receive a plaque, samples of her pin and more.

Look for rules on entering the 75th-anniversary competition in about, oh, 24 years. You’ll all be alumni by then.
She’s WHEELING HER WAY To the Top

By E. Thomas Hall

She’s WHEELING HER WAY To the Top

By E. Thomas Hall

“Rife” with entrepreneurial spirit, this college student is hardly content to skate by — she’s got her own business to help other aspiring artists.

Falling into the skateboard business
Considering that superheroes and zombies are among the most popular themes for her skateboards today, the idea of a space dog is not that strange at all. And while Laika Skate Co. has grown from offering skateboards to T-shirts, dog accessories, decals and helmets, it’s also helping launch other young, aspiring artists.

Rife, who’s studying graphic design and video production, provides peers with a way to sell their art and get used to the business environment. “I just market mostly around colleges or high schools,” she explains. “If they show interest like, ‘I want to be able to paint skateboards,’ or ‘I want to know how to market things like that,’ then I teach them. They can use my company to test the waters and make sure they like it.”

ON THE WEB

- Rife has been inspired by Justin Barnes, who’s well known for custom painting motorcycles such as the Harley raffled annually by SkillsUSA’s alumni association. Find out how you can win one at: www.skillsusa.org/store/harley.shtml
- SkillsUSA’s Entrepreneurship competition tests students’ knowledge in starting their own businesses. Read about this and almost 100 other contest opportunities at: www.skillsusa.org/compete/contests.shtml
Rife fell into this unusual business by accident. “I wanted to learn how to skateboard,” she remembers. “I’m not very balanced, so I didn’t want to go buy an expensive skateboard. I found one in my parents’ garage that was old and blank. I was like, ‘Well, I’m going to paint this before I skate on it just so it looks cooler at the park, and maybe people won’t make fun of me as much if I have a cool board.’”

“I was like, ‘OK, I’ll save this one, and I’ll paint a new one to skate on.’ I just kept going, and I never really learned to be good at skateboarding,” she laughs. “So I just sell them, and I’ll sponsor skateboarders who are good and just admire them.”

**Marketing her company and SkillsUSA**

Laika Skate Co. can be found on Facebook, and most of Rife’s marketing is by word of mouth. “People just spread the word: ‘There’s this girl who does hand-painted skateboards, and she’ll do anything you want on there,’” she adds.

Most of her sales are by Internet or the telephone. Prices start at $50, but Rife says an instructor was once offered $700 for a painted skateboard she’d given him that had a *Doctor Who* theme.

“I like to be reasonably priced, because if college students come and say, ‘I really want to get this for my sister or for myself,’ then I’ll be like, ‘Well, I can work with your budget so you can afford to get it.’”

Between classes and her business, she is staying busy this year as SkillsUSA’s college/postsecondary president.

“It’s really helped me develop as a person and overcome the challenges that I face,” says Rife, who’d like to move into advertising for major league baseball. “SkillsUSA has always been there with somebody to help me, whether with personal employment goals or educational goals.”

It’s in her blood, says her mother, Julie, who’s also her SkillsUSA chapter advisor. Both of Rife’s parents were state officers in career and technical organizations.

The family has grown to include a white German shepherd with pointy ears just like the dog on Rife’s business logo.

“I named her Laika and taught her how to skateboard as a puppy,” she says. “She’ll get on there and take off. It’s really cool to see. But now, she has to do it on the long board instead of an actual skateboard just because she’s so big.”

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“It’s really helped me develop as a person and overcome the challenges that I face. SkillsUSA has always been there with somebody to help me, whether with personal employment goals or educational goals.”
— Leah Rife, founder of Laika Skate Co.

Want to start your own business? Here’s how

“it gets tough sometimes, but if you are passionate about your business, it will bring you nothing but happiness,” Leah Rife says. “Good luck!” The young entrepreneur, whose art is pictured below, shares the following tips.

Get a business certificate. You must register your business name through your state to legally begin business. This is usually done through the secretary of state. Information can easily be found on your state government website. Also, you must a business license for your shop or if your house will be causing a change of traffic due to customers coming into and out of your home.

Customers love “swag.” Get some of the following made to give out or sell:
- T-shirts
- Decals
- Hats
- Key chains

If you can, customize your product for your customer. Customers love what they can make their own.

Social media is your friend. Your business should have an account with at least one of the following social media outlets:
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- YouTube

To best capture your customers’ attention, use #YourBusinessName and have photo challenges to get them interested.

Hire employees or independent contractors. If your product flow gets to be more than you can keep up with, you can hire employees to assist with business procedures. Just be sure to check standards within your area.

Price reasonably. Customers aren’t always made of money. You must keep your prices low enough to get your customers’ attention, but don’t price them so low that your time loses its value. •
We look forward to seeing you at NLSC in June!

Visit us today to get geared up for conference at:
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We look forward to seeing you at NLSC in June!
One Big Twist

On a Path to Winning

By Ann P. Schreiber

When the widest tornado on record demolished their school just weeks before SkillsUSA’s national competition, Canadian Valley Technical Center students applied what they learned through their membership.

Measuring 2.6 miles wide, the storm’s winds reached nearly 300 miles per hour — slamming into the El Reno, Okla., school on May 31, 2013, while evening students hunkered down in the basement. Fortunately, no one at the tech center was injured, but all five buildings on campus sustained major damage.

Less than two weeks later, service careers instructor Jayson Floyd reported that four SkillsUSA advisors and eight student competitors would still attend the National Leadership and Skills Conference in Kansas City, Mo.

“The SkillsUSA ideals that we teach our students about character, strength and resolve are being put to practice,” the advisor says.

Floyd describes how advisors returned to the damaged buildings to find SkillsUSA competition supplies. He and graphic design instructor Terry Robinson crawled through rubble to get to their offices. They found their students’ materials still stored in a plastic container, but the lid had come off, and the container had filled with about six inches of water.

ON THE WEB

See a local news report on the tornado destruction: http://tinyurl.com/mjenh3q

For details and images of this historic tornado, visit: http://www.srh.noaa.gov/oun/?n=events-20130531

Here are some tips from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on how to protect yourself during a tornado: http://www.spc.noaa.gov/fag/tornado/safety.html

A record-breaking tornado destroyed their school but not their spirits. Weeks before nationals, these students started over and earned a medal.
“Through the positive efforts that SkillsUSA provides through leadership conferences, community service and skills competition, we will continue to grow in spite of the setbacks.”

—Jason Floyd, service careers instructor, Canadian Valley Technology Center

They spread out the materials to dry in Floyd’s garage, but most were too damaged to rescue. He contacted the students, who met at another Canadian Valley campus, recreated their work and arrived in Kansas City ready to compete.

“SkillsUSA provides all the key elements that we instill in our students to achieve their personal goals,” says Floyd, who works primarily with young people who have special needs. “Through the positive efforts that SkillsUSA provides through leadership conferences, community service and skills competition, we will continue to grow in spite of the setbacks.”

Students Jennifer Taylor and Mariah Galloway salvaged their Community Action Project notebook and display, which wound up earning a silver medal. Taylor, who admits being devastated after working so hard on the first display, recreated the piece on her own at home.

For the students, seeing their school destroyed was difficult. Experiencing a tornado is nothing less than traumatic. With broken sentences and deliberate speech, these survivors vividly recount what they’ve been through. Each expresses tremendous gratitude that things didn’t turn out worse.

Sean Bruce and Tia Brewster, Employment Application Process contestants, say they were sad to lose their school.

Cynthia Horse, a technical assistant at Canadian Valley who lives in Chickasha, Okla., had lost her home to a tornado two years prior. Her mother and three children were there at the time and survived. Now her school is gone.

Instructor Robinson describes an unfathomable sight. “Right outside my back door ... there was a 148-foot-long, 32,000-pound propeller off of a wind energy tower that we had anchored in concrete to the ground. The tornado picked that propeller up, carried it a good 100 yards and sliced it into our Health Careers building like a knife in butter.”

School opened in August at a leased car dealership, and the reconstruction of the new campus is in the works. Being in a temporary space that’s much smaller than the campus is a challenge.

For Robinson, the outpouring of support for the school has been awe inspiring. His gratitude extends to the SkillsUSA Oklahoma alumni who picked up the dry cleaning tab for heavily soiled blazers and raised funds for new ones.

“It’s a teachable moment for us,” Floyd says. “You’re always going to have setbacks in life, and through SkillsUSA and through life, you can overcome these.”

Ever the proud teacher, Floyd adds, “I didn’t need a tornado to be inspired by these kids.” •

In the tornado’s aftermath: (clockwise from left) “Pride” remains in the rubble of the technical center; a SkillsUSA medallion hangs in a destroyed classroom; Floyd and Robinson rescue their regional advisor of the year awards, which survived unscathed.
The U.S. Army taught Tony Hamblin more than one set of skills. But after nearly 21 years of service, he was ready to leave the military and give civilian life a try.

The transition wasn’t a simple one. After going to work for a security company, Hamblin realized he wasn’t doing what he really wanted. “As I got to working as a manager in that company,” he explains, “I realized that the skills and the way we deal with individuals in the military is much different than those that you use to motivate and mentor civilians.”

Hamblin began looking for a way to bridge the gap between the skills he learned in the Army and those required as a civilian. He found it thanks to his wife, Mechelle, who was a cosmetology student and SkillsUSA member at Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) Oneida/Huntsville.

“She had a lifelong dream of being a cosmetologist and put that dream on hold while I served our country,” Hamblin says. He referred to himself as a “SkillsUSA husband” at that time, but Mechelle encouraged him to join as an active member when he began studying information technology at TCAT.

“She told me about SkillsUSA and how much I would love it. She was right,” he adds. Besides the usual professional and social benefits, Hamblin “saw SkillsUSA as a method to convert my military leadership skills into civilian leadership skills.”

Jumping right into the mix, Hamblin was elected as a state officer in both 2011 and 2012. He also competed in Extemporaneous Speech and won the state gold medal in 2012 and 2013. He went on to compete at the national championships, winning bronze in 2012 and silver in 2013.

He also found many ways to apply his military skills to life as a student.

“I was a drill instructor for three years,” he says. “In that position, I used many techniques to motivate and prepare my soldiers for their mission. Many of those same techniques I still use in my school and SkillsUSA life.”

Leaving the Army after 21 years was a challenge.

But for onetime drill instructor Tony Hamblin, joining SkillsUSA was a great way to transition from his old way of life to a new one.

By Craig E. Moore
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Hamblin noticed that both organizations focus on many of the same principles, including teamwork, hard work equaling success, and always striving for improvement.

“Those same principles lead to a successful career,” he says. “SkillsUSA has served as a bridge between my two lives.”

From enlisted man to officer
In 2013, Hamblin brought his leadership skills to the national stage when he was elected to SkillsUSA’s student leadership team. He’s now serving as the national college/postsecondary parliamentarian. Although he’s the oldest member of the team, Hamblin says he was prepared to work with a group of younger students because of his military training.

“When I was a drill instructor, I had to study what methods and techniques motivate the younger generation,” he explains. “Even in the military, it’s important to know what makes your team work effectively.”

One of his most emotional moments as a national officer came in September, during the Washington Leadership Training Institute. Hamblin was one of two SkillsUSA officers selected to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery.

“As a veteran, there is no greater honor than to be allowed to honor those brothers and sisters who have fallen paying the ultimate sacrifice,” he says.

“To be allowed to pay tribute to that family of mine while wearing the red jacket representing my new family was truly a humbling experience. I felt that I got to actually depict the ‘bridge’ that I had referenced before.”

He found the experience to be very emotional for another reason. One of his trainees from the Army had been killed while serving in Iraq.

“I felt that I was honoring her and finally getting closure for her,” Hamblin says. He points out that this recruit was just 19, the same age of many of the students he works and learns with every day.

“SkillsUSA has allowed me to be a role model for my kids. Work hard, study hard, and no matter what your age, continue to seek self-improvement.”

— Tony Hamblin, pictured with his wife, Mechelle, and three of their children

When he isn’t busy with school or SkillsUSA, Hamblin likes to spend time with his wife and their four children. After 15 years trying, he and Mechelle weren’t sure they’d ever start a family. Doctors told them they’d never be able to have any biological offspring.

The couple still wanted children, so they adopted three Japanese-Filipino siblings while Hamblin was stationed in Hawaii. Four years later, they found out that Mechelle was pregnant, despite the doctors’ predictions.

“It’s God’s gift,” Hamblin says, and their oldest son is now a SkillsUSA member in high school. “We are a SkillsUSA family.”

Hamblin isn’t finished with school quite yet. After completing his IT systems degree, he began studying business systems. “This will provide me with the business training I need to open my own IT business in our community,” he says.

In the meantime, Hamblin has a position with the Tennessee Board of Regents, where he works for the current president of SkillsUSA’s board of directors, James King.

“SkillsUSA has allowed me to be a true role model for my kids,” Hamblin reflects. “Work hard, study hard, and no matter what your age, continue to seek self-improvement.”

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Combining Two Passions Is Instrumental to Success

He didn’t just want to play guitars; he wanted to build them. Finding a SkillsUSA training program he loved gave Daniel Bowman the tools to begin living his rock-and-roll dreams.

Bowman was obsessed, spending time after school and his entire spring vacation working on the guitar. He soon realized that two passions he’d once viewed as separate influences on his life were now making beautiful music together.

“There were so many things I learned [in class] that I could apply to the guitar,” he explains. “The guitar neck, for example, that’s pretty much a joint — a pocket where two pieces of wood meet together — so that really related to doing wood joints.”

The student credits Botelho with more than just carpentry lessons. “He helped me through everything. When I think I can’t do something, he finds a way to influence me to do it. He’s been a big part of my life.”

Bowman’s design (pictured in the photo at left), a telecaster based on a model used by Led Zeppelin’s Jimmy Page, was the talk of the state competition and won a gold medal. He’s kept his carpentry skills sharp in other areas, too, recently winning a bronze in his SkillsUSA district Cabinet-making competition.

“In a [career and technical] program, you’re pushed more,” says Bowman, who’s now a senior. “It makes you more reliable, helps you plan things better. SkillsUSA made me want to reach toward the top, to stand out.” And rock on. •

By Tom Kercheval
TAG, YOU’RE IT! NEW TRAINING BOOSTS LEADERS

Delegates to SkillsUSA’s national conference are making better connections through an event called TAG Tuesday. The acronym represents these students’ quest to “Train, Act and Grow” from their leadership experiences.

“Great addition, SkillsUSA,” one participant commented after last year’s pilot event. “This was the best professional development experience that I have received as a job seeker and extremely beneficial to my future success.”

The goal of TAG Tuesday is to help delegates engage more, give more and ultimately be better representatives for their states. Three separate tracks are available: one for high-school state officers, one for high-school chapter members and another for college/postsecondary members.

Training for high-school delegates includes member recruitment and creating an atmosphere of teamwork. It also teaches the concept of servant leadership, in which the person at the top shares power, puts other people’s needs first and focuses on helping them reach their potential. The day concludes with a hands-on, experiential activity.

Meanwhile, college/postsecondary delegates focus on personal skills to kick-start their careers: networking, marketing themselves and interviewing for jobs. Their training culminates with one-on-one meetings with business leaders who offer feedback on the students’ résumés and interviewing techniques.

“The first interview was powerful because of the direct feedback I received,” one postsecondary delegate describes the experience. “I was able to take that and immediately make my second interview impactful.” Says another, “I have learned skills that I would have never learned elsewhere. This was very empowering.”

TAG Tuesday is a special project sponsored by ADESA and Insurance Auto Actions Inc. through the SkillsUSA Foundation. Preregistration is required for the June 24 event. Find more delegate events at: www.skillsusa.org/events/nlscdel.shtml.

See a brief video of TAG Tuesday training at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f-QUeUHyHfk
TOOLS TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR CAREER READINESS

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— Author Unknown

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— President Obama

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www.skillsusa.org/store/
Sharing What You Know So Others Join the Show

You understand the benefits and opportunities SkillsUSA membership provides. You know why you’re involved and what you want to get out of that involvement. You know what SkillsUSA is to you. But have you ever tried explaining what it is to someone who’s not a member?

As a class, split into three groups and have each group answer “What is SkillsUSA?” as if the question’s being asked by one of the following: a student, a business and industry representative, and a parent. Using some official lingo is great, but also try tailoring your answers to your audience. What would impress these people? What would make them interested in learning more? What would make them feel as if SkillsUSA could serve their interests? Reconvene and share your answers, and remember them the next time the question strikes (and it will).

Get more ideas with the newly updated What is SkillsUSA? DVD. Find it at: www.skillsusa.org/store/dvd.html.

If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it.

— Margaret Fuller

Find the photo, win a prize

No, the picture on the left isn’t abstract art. It’s actually a distorted part of another photo in this issue. Find the original photo and send us the page number where it appears to win a SkillsUSA sport duffel bag (first prize) or travel mug (second prize). To enter, email your answer, name, address and phone number to: anyinfo@skillsusa.org (include “Photo Contest” in the subject line). Or, send to: SkillsUSA Photo Contest, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. One first- and one second-prize winner will be drawn at random from the correct entries. Entries must be received by Aug. 1. Congratulations to last issue’s winners: Zaqwam Huntington of Cooperstown, N.Y., and Holden Forrestor of Lebanon, Pa.
GOING TO BAT FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

In Hastings, Neb., Adams Central High School students Kimberly Spartz and Ali Stark organized bingo games to raise funds and collect items for their local homeless shelter. Students donated household items, hygiene products, nonperishable food items or clothing. In return, they were given bingo cards depending on the value of the items, or they paid $1 per card to play. Local businesses donated prizes, while teachers offered awards of five points to a test score or passes to skip homework.

In a school conference room, grades seven through 12 played bingo over three sessions during separate class periods. According to Spartz and Stark, 54 percent of the student body participated. For their efforts, the pair earned a gold medal in SkillsUSA's Community Action Project competition.

Painted pumpkin fundraiser
Auto body students at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo, Calif., armed themselves with paint sprayers to raise travel funds for SkillsUSA regional, state and national competitions.

Using bright metallic hues, students gave pumpkins a shiny coat and offered the decorative gourds for $10 to $20 each. To see more photos, visit: http://tinyurl.com/qcyqzva.

These pumpkins aren’t for bumpkins.

Texting and driving don’t mix
According to a 2011 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half of U.S. high-school students age 16 years or older text or email while driving.

With this dangerous mix in mind, Braedon Santos of Greater New Bedford (Mass.) Regional Vocational Technical School took action. He launched an awareness campaign that included having drivers sign pledges not to text and drive. He also helped develop a banner and poster with safety warnings on the issue. Santos presented his campaign for SkillsUSA’s Community Action Project contest at nationals and took home a bronze medal.

Bingo benefits homeless

In Hastings, Neb., Adams Central High School students Kimberly Spartz and Ali Stark organized bingo games to raise funds and collect items for their local homeless shelter.

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Using bright metallic hues, students gave pumpkins a shiny coat and offered the decorative gourds for $10 to $20 each. To see more photos, visit: http://tinyurl.com/qcyqzva.

These pumpkins aren’t for bumpkins.

Texting and driving don’t mix
According to a 2011 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half of U.S. high-school students age 16 years or older text or email while driving.

With this dangerous mix in mind, Braedon Santos of Greater New Bedford (Mass.) Regional Vocational Technical School took action. He launched an awareness campaign that included having drivers sign pledges not to text and drive. He also helped develop a banner and poster with safety warnings on the issue. Santos presented his campaign for SkillsUSA’s Community Action Project contest at nationals and took home a bronze medal.

Bingo benefits homeless

In Hastings, Neb., Adams Central High School students Kimberly Spartz and Ali Stark organized bingo games to raise funds and collect items for their local homeless shelter.

Students donated household items, hygiene products, nonperishable food items or clothing. In return, they were given bingo cards depending on the value of the items, or they paid $1 per card to play. Local businesses donated prizes, while teachers offered awards of five points to a test score or passes to skip homework.

In a school conference room, grades seven through 12 played bingo over three sessions during separate class periods. According to Spartz and Stark, 54 percent of the student body participated. For their efforts, the pair earned a gold medal in SkillsUSA’s Community Action Project competition.

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SkillsUSA Champions features our members’ photography. We’re looking for images of SkillsUSA chapters in action, or ones that show individual members’ concentration or perseverance. For details, email thall@skillsusa.org (put “Image Photo” in the subject header) or write SkillsUSA Champions, 14001 SkillsUSA Way, Leesburg, VA 20176. The photographer’s chapter is awarded $150.

We need to work with organizations like SkillsUSA that bring students, educators and industry together to promote technical skill development and career opportunities.

Caterpillar Inc.’s Mary Bell, a former SkillsUSA board member, writes in U.S. News & World Report on the gender gap in manufacturing:

Pivot Point offers the highest quality mannequins to recreate the live model cutting and coloring experience.

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The 440® 12-Inch Tongue and Groove Plier. It’s 20.67 oz. of patented know-how from its laser-hardened teeth to the tips of its CHANNELLOCK BLUE® handles. It’s what happens when ingenuity, determination and backbone decide to throw a party in a 1500° hardening furnace. It’s a whole foot of American-made, high-carbon steel that won’t take no for an answer. It’s time you owned a CHANNELLOCK® tool.

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If you hold it up to your ear, you can hear America working.